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RAIN UPON THE MOWN GRASS,

AND OTHER SERMONS.

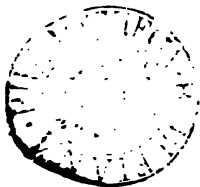
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SAMUEL MARTIN,

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TO

The Church

ASSEMBLING IN WESTMINSTER CHAPEL,

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED.



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I

“RAIN UPON THE MOWN GRASS.”

“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth.”—PSALM lxxii. 6.

THIS Psalm describes the empire of the King of kings, and our text exhibits the gracious and genial character of his dominion. Some men say that Christianity is not genial, that the Christian scheme exhibits God in a most unlovely aspect, that the doctrines of Christ are dark with awful mysteries, that the promises of the Christian dispensation offer but little of present benefit, and therefore of certain and tangible advantage, that its precepts demand conduct which is too high and self-sacrificing, that its ordinances are depressing rather than elevating, and that, as a whole, Christianity promotes a narrow mind and a feeble judgment, morbid and morose feelings, an enslaved will, a too sensitive conscience, an unmanly bearing, and a character which is intellectually low, and unsocial, and melancholy.

Is this charge against the religion of Jesus Christ just, and can it be substantiated?

We assert that it is most unjust, and cannot be maintained; that it rests not upon the rock of truth, but upon the hardened sand of willing ignorance or of determined prejudice. Be it known, however, that the Christianity of which we speak is not the representation of Christianity given by every creed,

or by every catechism, or by every hymn or spiritual song, or by every system of theology. It is not everything which is seen in every Christian, or in every sect, or in every church. It is not even the whole of religious life embodied by the most perfect Christian, or by the purest sect, or by the most prosperous church; but the Christianity described by the old inspired poets and prophets; embodied in Christ's life while he was upon earth; written in the New Testament Scriptures, and now dispensed to mankind by the Holy Ghost; and this Christianity, which alone is pure, we declare to be most genial. He who embraces it is nourished up, not only in the words of a true faith and of sound doctrine, but in whatsoever things are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. And do you in such an assembly as this deny the genial character of Christianity? many of you are perhaps remarking; and can we need to be put in remembrance of such truths? We respond, that as a matter of mere opinion, you certainly cannot need to be reminded of the truth of our text, but as a question of practice, it is possible that some do ignore the fact that Christianity is genial, and therefore it is needful to discuss even this elementary topic in an assembly consisting largely of believers. In doing this, we will look first at Christianity as a scheme, and secondly, at Christianity as a fact.

1. As a scheme, the religion of Jesus Christ is a device to seek and to save the lost. It has regard to the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind, and the bruised. It is not a creative, but a recreative and restorative design. There is but one creature upon this earth lost, and that creature is man. Man is lost; lost to himself; lost to harmony with the universe, lost to the good, and the true, and the beautiful; lost to God; lost as a piece of treasure may be lost, out of his proper place; lost as a sheep may

be lost, going astray, having turned to his own way; lost as a prodigal child is lost, alienated from a good Father by wicked works; and assuming that man is lost, Christianity aims simply to restore him. It is a scheme, not to condemn but to convert, not to ruin but to regenerate, not to punish but to pardon, not to judge but to justify, not to scathe and waste but to sanctify and save, not to sink in destruction but to raise and to glorify.

2. And it is a *divine* device, consisting of means arranged by our Father in heaven to prevent his banished ones being finally expelled from him. It is not a scheme for awakening God's compassion, but a design which manifests and reveals and expresses and conveys the mercy which endureth for ever. This divine design is therefore a scheme of divine paternal love. And seeing that love in its ordinary forms cannot reach objects when they sink below their normal state, the love which planned the Christian system is that variety of love which we call “grace,” that is, love going after its objects as they retire clad in the scarlet robe of guilty shame, love clinging to its objects when they have proved themselves most unworthy, love overcoming evil with good, and love assuming a gracious form to the unloving and unlovable. Such love is like a plant of renown, or a flower of paradise, blooming in a horrible pit; it is like a choice vine or a tree of precious produce bearing its golden fruit, not in its own rich and warm soil, but in cold and miry clay; it is like an ark of refuge floating on waters so stormy that they have caused every other craft to founder; it is like precious light lingering above the horizon after the sun has suddenly set in awful storms. It is like—ah! to what shall we liken it? We want a high class of figures beyond all we have ever seen, and a style of metaphors which we have no power to create. Never

do we so feel our poverty and helplessness as when we try to speak of the grace of God. But what we wish now to say is, that the Christian scheme is created by the genius of divine grace. All love can devise and design, but this form of love is most skilful and fertile in invention. The genius of the imagination can write poetry, but the expressions of grace are the sweetest, deepest, divinest poetry. The former can paint beauty, but grace creates and restores beauty, giving beauty for ashes. The former can represent life, but grace restores life ; for by grace are ye saved. The Christian scheme is the product of divine love.

3. In this design, chief service is assigned to one who is called the Son of God, who is the Word made flesh, and God manifest in flesh. The service which is rendered by the Son of God is, in the first instance, chiefly by means of abasement and toil, suffering and death. This part of the Christian scheme appears to some men so ungenial that they ignore it or reject it. Now we admit the mysteriousness of the person of Jesus, we allow that the manger of Bethlehem is cold, and the flight into Egypt ignominious, and the course of life at Nazareth mean, and the temptation in the wilderness dreary, and the time spent in work a dark night of toil, and that Gethsemane was exceedingly sorrowful, and the cross most bloody, and the death on the cross most terrible and degraded, and the exceeding anguish of Jesus' soul most startling, and the wounding for our transgressions an awful expedient, and the entire humiliation and suffering of the Son of God such as to be a wonder of wonders even to every one that believeth. But there is a sunny side to Bethlehem ; dignity riseth out of Nazareth ; the wilderness becomes a fruitful field ; the night of toil leads to a day of reward ; the sweat of blood gives place to a glow of gladness ; the cross brings a crown ; death is the beginning of

new life; and all that is dark and sad and gloomy in the sacrifice of the Son of God leads to all that is bright, and blessed, and joyous, and sunny in man's salvation. Now without the mediatorial service assigned in the scheme of redemption to the Son of God, man is a sinner still, and in this case a sinner without a saviour. And, tell me, which is the more cheerful position?—that in which salvation is obtainable, although it be by precious blood and ignominious death? or that in which salvation is impossible? for "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."¹

4. The Christian scheme provides that salvation should be revealed and applied, not by man, but by the Holy Ghost. This arrangement secures the revelation being according to truth, and the administration being unailing and sure. The work of the Spirit of God upon the individual man is to convince of sin, to draw to Christ, to keep the soul near to Christ, to quicken and regenerate and sanctify and instruct and comfort, and to preserve the soul and spirit unto everlasting life. And this part of the scheme of salvation is as important, and at the same time as genial, as the redemption-devising grace of the Father, and as the mediation of the Son of God. Perfect knowledge, consummate wisdom, unmixed goodness and infinite love in him whose work directly affects our inner life, is a fact upon which we cannot but look with joy. Few indeed are they who are not suffering from the ignorance or want of skill or imprudence or unkindness or insufficiency of those upon whom they have been dependent for services. Blessed be God, we have in the Holy Ghost a perfect instructor and educator, and a complete comforter and spiritual operator.

¹ Acts iv. 12.

5. As a system of morals, Christianity is based upon love. True love being awakened in the soul, its fruit includes all that is demanded both for God and for man. Outloving love fulfils every Christian law, and so genial are the workings of this simple principle that one of our own poets has said, not with that license to colour highly every fact which is universally awarded the poet, but with a close adherence to naked truth,

"For love is heaven and heaven is love."

6. The Christian system is aggressive, aiming at comprehension without compromise; but its mode of aggression is as genial as its doctrines and precepts, its promises and spirit. Does it not work its way as leaven and advance as a growing tree? spreading itself, not by the sword and the fetter and the prison, but by a moral and spiritual power, by the force of its own vitality. Unlike the subjects of the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensations, who were born of blood, and unlike the followers of Mahomet, who, in his latter days, were driven to him by the sword, the disciples of Christ are drawn to him by moral suasion, and are kept to him by the power of conviction. Whatever the saved man may do or may become, and whatever power may be at work within him, he is willing to do that which he works, and he is prepared to become that unto which he grows up. Persuasion and instruction are the appliances chiefly employed by God himself.

7. If we look at the Christian dispensation as a matter of individual experience, its genial aspect abides unchanged. This scheme provides that the blessings which it is designed to convey should be received by faith; not by mere belief, but the reliance and trust which spring from such belief. And can any principle be more genial than the faith of a Christian? Unlike doubt and uncertainty, fear and

remorse and gloomy apprehension, which in human nature are as destructive worms at the roots of plants, this trust Godward is nutritive of all that is pleasant and good ; it stimulates and strengthens every power and susceptibility and principle worth preserving, and crushes only that which is vile and mischievous. There is joy and peace in believing. "Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."¹ "He that believeth shall not make haste."² "The just shall live by his faith."³ "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up : that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."⁴ "I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."⁵ "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."⁶ "I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."⁷ "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."⁸ "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father."⁹

Nor is it unimportant to observe that the salvation of God is (according to this design) to be revealed from faith to faith. Every believing soul is required to declare the object of his trust to the unbelieving ; every saved man is required to reveal his Saviour to others ;—the effect of this arrangement being to break down selfishness, and to promote a hearty and self-sacrificing goodwill.

¹ 1 Peter i. 8.

² Isaiah xxviii. 16.

³ Hab. ii. 4.

⁴ John iii. 14, 15.

⁵ John vi. 35.

⁶ John vii. 38.

⁷ John xi. 25, 26.

⁸ John xii. 46.

⁹ John xiv. 12.

8. One word as to the final issue of this scheme. The Christian system finds its consummation in a new creation, perfected in all its parts and bearings. The individual man is born again, and born into everlasting life. His body dies, but it dies to live again; dies to be raised from the grave to glory; dies to be changed from weakness to power, from dishonour to honour, from corruption to incorruption, from a state of abasement to the likeness of Christ's glorious body. And the soul and spirit, saved from ignorance and folly and vain imaginations and corrupt affections and an evil conscience and a rebellious will, saved from all sin and from all sorrow, are uplifted to knowledge and wisdom and perfect love and fulness of joy and spotless purity and God-like righteousness, so that the whole humanity thus redeemed is as happy and as holy as though it had never, never known a fallen world like this. Society too, according to the provisions of this design, will be reformed and remodelled, so that the saved among mankind, instead of being isolated and divided, shall form one blessed brotherhood, with Jehovah as the recognised Father of all. And there shall be a new earth and a new heaven. This globe and her firmament shall be resolved into their elements, and out of them shall be eliminated a sphere in which order and beauty and life shall reign for ever. And in this new world, this paradise regained, this garden of the universe, this celestial and everlasting home, the recipients of the blessings of the Christian dispensation shall live in harmony and in peace, in holiness and happiness, and in the restored image of God, without the danger of falling or the fear of any evil, for ever and for ever.

But between the introduction of Christianity and its consummation, the subjects of the Christian scheme are exposed to suffering. Yet so complete are the provisions of this

divine design, that it brings good out of evil, and joy out of sorrow. As the pruning-knife to the vine, as the refiner's fire to alloyed metal, as the wine-press to the grape, and the olive-press to olive berries, so are all trials and sorrows under the power of the Christian system. It brings wealth out of want, and riches out of poverty, and glory out of dishonour, and energy out of weakness, and life out of death, and it causes all things to work together for good.

Now, if this be the Christian scheme ; if it be a plan of redemption designed by the grace of God, and if it be executed, so far as its general provisions are concerned, by the Son of God, and if it be revealed and applied by the Holy Ghost the Comforter ; if its morality be based upon love, and if it be spread by moral and spiritual forces ; if it be received by faith ; if it give not the spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind ; if it bring good out of evil, and be consummated in the restoration of God's image to man, and of all saved men to the paradise regained ; if it bring knowledge, and wisdom, and pardon, and purity, and patience, and love, and victory, and life ; then we ask, Can this scheme be other than genial, and ought not its effect upon its disciples to be the nourishing within them of all goodness, and the production of genuine and habitual cheerfulness ? Not genial ? Then there is nothing genial. Soft morning light is not genial. Balmy evening air is not genial. Gentle and warm rain is not genial. Spring sunshine is not genial. The mother's bosom is not genial. There is nothing genial on this earth. I had almost said, there can be nothing genial in heaven.

But let us look, *secondly*, at Christianity as a fact. It is a fact. God has sent Jesus. Christ has come. The Son of God has died for the ungodly. The Comforter has come. Men are saved. The scheme has long been

working, and effects have been produced, results have been achieved. As a fact, Christianity when first promulgated was too genial to be received by the people to whom it was then presented. Was it not too gracious for the exclusive Jew, who was prepared to receive only such a dispensation as would deliver him from his political degradation, and confirm him in the sole possession of his religious privileges? But as it spread beyond these once elect of God, did it not give unity to the mixed belief of the Samaritan, and purity to his half-pagan worship? Did it not take firm hold of the half-blind, half-deaf, torpid, lukewarm, luxurious Asiatic, and finding him much less than a true man, so quicken and inspire and cherish him, as to lift his life into unity with the life of God? Did it not so address itself to the Greeks as to wash the low and lascivious from their fornication and idolatry and adultery and effeminacy and dishonesty and drunkenness and extortion, and from all moral filth, leaving them renewed and sanctified? and, at the same time, did it not reduce the proud scholar and philosopher to the humble position and meek behaviour of a little child? And what shall we say of Rome? Ah! who can describe the low estate of her myriads of slaves, their brutality, their savageness, their filthiness, their vices, the horrible pit of degradation into which they had sunk, and their senselessness and stupidity toward all the claims of morality and religion? But no sooner has Christianity entered Rome, than it begins to work in this quarry of hard and neglected material, and soon it brings out forms of beauty worthy to stand by those divine shapes which have been wrought from patrician marble. But what can fill the gulf, or even bridge the gulf, which separated the noble from the slave? Only one thing could do it, that which actually effected it,—this genial Christian system, even that

Christianity of which one of our great sceptics has remarked : While the Roman empire "was invaded by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigour from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the cross on the ruins of the Capitol."

To exhibit fully Christianity as a fact, we must present, that which is impossible here and now, the history of Christianity itself. We ask, therefore, in few words, Has not the Christian system purified nations already civilized from much effeminacy and luxury and profligacy? and has it not enthroned a pure and high civilization where barbarism had long reigned? Has it not raised countries, previously insignificant, to positions of universal influence and renown?—our own country being a notable example. Has it not abolished serfdom and slavery in many places, and created a sentiment which shall lead to their universal abolition? broken the rods of more oppressors than we can number, and thrown around society an atmosphere in which tyrants cannot live? Without professing to revolutionize national and political institutions, has it not uplifted the masses of mankind, and smitten with heavy and deadly blows despotism and absolutism in all shapes and under every name? Has it not lessened the unjust rigours of law, and purified the judgment-seat from the foul blots of partiality and injustice? And Christianity has been a nursing-mother to science and to art, while it has extended commerce, quickened trade, improved agriculture and manufactures, created much literature, brought medical science to its present position, circulated much useful knowledge, and stimulated and improved every lawful occupation. Christianity seeks out our homes for its temples, and as she stands upon the

threshold of our dwellings, she raises her cheerful and loving voice and cries, "Peace be to this house!" Nor does she bless merely in word. Has she not taken woman by the hand and improved her domestic position, lifting her up, in some countries at least, from the feet of man, and placing her by his side as the heaven-provided supplement of his whole nature? Has not Christianity cast the shield of her protection over children, both great and small, securing tenderness of treatment and gentleness of discipline, and at the same time binding children to their parents by obedience and confidence and love? And do domestic servants owe nothing to a system which has so regarded them as to inscribe in its statute-book a law which requires all masters to render to their servants the things which are just and equal? Without doubt, the religion of Jesus Christ has made myriads of homes happy, which, apart from its power, would have been the abodes of hatred and wrath and misery, and it has wondrously softened the manners of men, while it has subdued their gross vices.

Christianity is peculiarly the minister of consolation and of all the offices of benevolence. Wherever it is planted, we see her teaching the young, befriending the fatherless, helping the widow, relieving the poor, healing the sick, showing hospitality to the stranger, seeking the release of the captive, visiting the prisoner, and, as she has opportunity, doing good unto all men. The hospital, and the dispensary, and the Sunday-school, and all schools for the poor, and the alms-house, and the reformatory, are the creation of her own kind hands. Nor can we wonder at those manifestations of that which is genial, when we remember that the presence of Christianity within the heart involves the presence of all that is genial there. It presents genial subjects to the mind and genial objects to the soul, and it must give a

genial aspect to the character, and prompts its disciples to generous and noble deeds.

Think, brethren, of the state of society before the religion of Jesus was introduced, and compare its condition then with its subsequent state—say, Rome under Nero with Rome under Constantine; or Great Britain in the second century with our country in the nineteenth; or all nations a century ago with the state of mankind now. Has there been no progress in all that is intelligent, and humane, and generous, and free? and is not this advancement directly traceable to the Christian system? We are not satisfied with the results and effects as visible anywhere, but we cannot be unmindful of that which has been accomplished; and we say that Christianity does grow in our world as a tree of life, whose very leaves are for the healing of the nations; it does come down, wherever it exerts influence, like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth; it does shine as the sun of our world, and if all that it is, and if all that it has given and wrought, were to be abstracted from our world, it would leave little beside darkness, sterility, and death.

Brethren! I bless God that I am a Christian, and I am sure that every Christian here present blesseth him too. We call not the proud sceptic or the boasted unbeliever happy. We bless God that we are Christians. And now I exhort you, first to glory in being Christians, and secondly, to represent fairly the Christian system. Have we not in some things, and often grievously, misrepresented it? A fearful thing this, to misrepresent the dispensation of infinite and eternal love. Who are the rich? who are the noble? who are the strong? who are safe,—if not the Christians? Let us be devoutly careful how we present Christianity to others, both by our lips and our lives, and let us bring fully out its

genial aspects. Let us be a gospel to the poor. Cold rationalism is not Christianity, nor stern dogmatism, nor the imposition of man-made creeds by the force of human anathemas. Churchism is not Christianity, neither high nor low, established nor free. Nothing that is untrue, or unlovely, or mean, or unreal, or selfish, or dishonourable in the character and lives of Christians, is Christianity. But how often are all these things accounted Christianity itself ! Let us, in the name of God, drive away all that is ignorant and prejudiced and foolish and bigoted and narrow and morose and melancholy and morbid and exclusive and repulsive ; and let us put on, as Christ's disciples, the beautiful raiment which he always wore, a material whose warp is faith and whose woof is love, and which shows upon its surface the chaste forms and the pleasant colours of whatsoever is of good report. Let love, kindled as a fire within the heart, give lustre to the eye, brightness to the countenance, bloom to the cheek, and animation to the whole expression ; and let kindness open the hand in unostentatious liberality, and make the feet swift on errands of mercy. Let the genial doctrines we believe, and the genial precepts we obey, and the genial promises which we have received, make us genial, clothing us with cheerfulness, not as with a scarlet robe worn for a state occasion, but with a cheerfulness as inseparable and as natural as the ruddy glow of health. Some Christians come down upon you with the destructiveness of hail, and others with the coldness of snow, and others with the blighting power of the east wind, and others with the withering force of a scorching sun ; but if we would fairly represent our master, we must come down as rain upon the mown grass. Be genial in all your deportment and bearing ; nourish the young by tenderness and gentleness ; cherish the new convert by sympathy

and affection ; assist the inquirer by advice and encouragement ; comfort the penitent by testifying the gospel of the grace of God ; strengthen the weak and feeble-minded by feeding them with the pure milk of the word ; relieve the doubting by showing them the foundation of faith ; help those who are searching for the truth by answering their questions and encouraging them in their search ; and nourish those who exhibit the smoking flax of incipient religious desire by the breath of prayer. And while you exhibit in your own persons the genial aspects of Christianity, sustain even to the uttermost all those enterprises and organizations which show the sunny side of the Christian system—the day-school, the Sabbath-school, the benevolent society, the union of churches, and our missions for home and for abroad.

We descendants of the Puritans are in great danger of exhibiting Christianity in an ungenial aspect. We are children of witnesses who prophesied in sackcloth, and there is special danger of our making the sackcloth an essential part of the testimony. In days of persecution, Christ calls his followers to wear sackcloth, but their common raiment is to be a robe rich in its fabric, and pleasant in its colour, and beautiful in form.

To be really genial we must maintain personal intercourse with Christ by the aid of the Holy Ghost. We must often speak to him, and more often listen to him. We must constantly be looking unto him. Then shall we receive and reflect the bright beams of his grace, and by our whole demeanour win souls to our Saviour. To be right and true and strong is our first duty ; to be attractive and cheerful and genial is our next duty ; and "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."¹

¹ *Philippians* iv. 13.

II

SPRING THOUGHTS.

"Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

"Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof."
—PSALM lxxv. 9, 10.

THESE words are part of a song of praise, not a harvest-song only, but a song for spring and for summer, for fruitful seasons. They describe certain natural facts with which we are all familiar—the falling of rain, the up-springing and out-coming of grass and herbs and foliage, until the lap of the earth is full of increase, the natural preparation of the land for the bringing forth of corn, the appearance of the corn first in blade, the equal distribution of moisture over wide tracts of land, and the bringing in of the season of spring. The songs of individual saints, the psalms of the universal church, the writings of prophets, evangelists, and apostles, the sermons of Christian preachers, the religious conversation of private Christians, and the lessons of Christian teachers, contain far higher themes than the fertilising rain, and the fruitful earth, and the beauteous spring. Still, if the formation of our earth be worthy of a weekly celebration, if that which constitutes the globe be

pronounced by God as very good, if the brightest examples of piety furnished by inspiration are patterns of men who appreciated the material world, if the holy writings abound in illustrations and analogies taken from the earth and from all that therein is, if that which is material have a spiritual signification, if the Saviour direct us to field-flowers and to birds for instruction, if the earth be the Lord's and the fulness thereof, we cannot wander far from the right path when we sometimes ask you to listen to the spiritual lessons taught by the innumerable things which God has made.

I know that the material creation is not the brightness of God's glory, and that it contains no image of his person; but the moon gives light, although her light be not that of the sun, and the glow-worm is luminous, though its brightness be not that of the star. I know that the material creation does not teach us the essential and fundamental Christian truths; it does not show how sin can be pardoned, or how forfeited life can be recovered, or how we can be succoured in temptation, or comforted in trouble, or saved from sin; but are we to accept only the greatest good, and to refuse all inferior blessings? Light is sweet and precious, although, instead of being a ray from the sun, it is only a spark from a flint. We need all the light and wisdom and help which we can acquire. Therefore, while we follow prophets to Sinai and Horeb, and evangelists to Bethlehem and Nazareth and Jerusalem and Bethany and Gethsemane and Calvary and Olivet, let us also go with the writer of this Psalm to trees planted by rivers of water, to green pastures and still waters, to the sea and to the mountains, to the trees and to the grass and to the beasts of the field; and let us accept these divine object-lessons with a humble, lowly, and teachable spirit. If the works of man interest us, as seen in the arts useful and fine, and as seen in manufactures and

agriculture, the works of God are greater, incomparably greater as works, and greater as means of moral and religious instruction. The close follower of Christ will learn from the works of God, and the spiritually-minded will learn from the works of God. All such as are taught by the Holy Ghost will learn from the works of God; and, as they live in the midst of these works, they will be ever learning. Nor can it be said of them, if they be true disciples, as of some of ancient times—"never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

In harmony with these remarks let us try to learn some of the lessons taught us by this season of spring.

1. Spring follows winter, and ushers in summer, according to an appointed order. This fact teaches the continuous control and government of God. The regular succession of the seasons seems to declare that "the Lord reigneth." "Thou visitest the earth." God seems to come with the coming-in of each of the seasons. In some respects, during winter, God seems like a man travelling into a far country. Darkness and barrenness and coldness suggest absence on the part of God. The spring looks like his return. The great change it involves cheerily whispers, "He is not far from any one of us." In longer days and a warmer atmosphere and a revived earth, God comes to us. These things are not of necessity, but of providence. There are second causes, but above all these is the First Cause, intelligent, loving, and free. God rules in all, over all, and above all. He is not displaced or supplanted by the forces and agencies which he employs, he is not absorbed by care of other worlds, he is not indifferent toward the earth. A personal superintendence and providence are not beneath his dignity, or in anywise distasteful to him. As Maker and Life-Giver and Father, "Thou visitest the earth and waterest it."

2. The spring season is a time of resurrection to life throughout the vegetable kingdom. This suggests the continued life-inspiring power of God. There is not only infinite life in God, there is also an immeasurable life-giving power in God. In a double sense Jehovah is the living God: "Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water." When God visits the earth in spring he makes it rich in life. Death has reigned during winter; God's coming is a victory of life over death. Nothing seems so one with the nature and essence of God as life. The mysteriousness of the vital force, its invisibility, its manifold development, make it appear very like himself. God's touch is life-giving, God's voice is life-inspiring, God's presence is life-imparting. Spring reveals to us the fact that in God is the power of restoring and renewing and increasing and perpetuating life.

3. The great and various changes which the spring season involves show forth the unchangeableness of God. These changes were established at the beginning, and were confirmed when Noah came forth from the ark. On that occasion God spake these words, and said, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."¹ The return of spring declares that there is no change in the divine purpose. There is not in God the caprice which would change the established order without a reason, nor that restlessness which would search for or invent a reason, nor that impatience which would arrest the slow working together of all that is involved in the spring season. This is the more remarkable when we reflect on the wickedness of man. God visits the earth, and what does he see? He finds, as in the days of Noah, that the fabrication of man's

¹ Genesis viii. 22.

heart is evil continually. False religion is still almost universal. True religion is corrupted. But few who have the Christian revelation believe it. The works of God's hand are in some cases neglected, in many cases abused, and in other cases divorced from himself, the maker of all. The ignorant cannot see God in his own temple, and in his own house. The wise in human wisdom often deny his existence, or question his personal superintendence and control. Well may God say, "I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."¹

4. The loveliness of the spring season is a reflection of the beauty of God. Everything at this time is beautiful, sky and earth and water, trees and flowers and pasture, birds and beasts and creeping things, forms and colours and odours. Now all these are the embodiments of divine ideas. Every living thing is a thought of God expressed, an original thought. God is no imitator, no copyist.

"If such the sweetness of the stream,
What must the fountain be!"

What a glorious nature that must be which could devise and originate all that is beautiful in the spring! In tracing God's works to God himself, our course is not like the course of him who searches for the source of some rivers. There are rivers which flow from deep and broad lakes, but other rivers rise from small springs, and he who traces the course of such a river finds the stream contract as he approaches the source. But he who traces good to the parent of good, is like one who follows a river in its course to the ocean—that which is shallow becomes deep, and that which is narrow becomes broad, until the investigator finds himself face to face with a wide and open sea.

¹ Malachi iii. 6.

5. The joyousness of spring speaks to us of the happiness of God. Beauty and joy are not always combined, but they exist together in God. God is happy, and his happiness is of a Godly sort. But some will say, Does not the whole creation groan and travail in pain together? We answer, certainly. There is an amount of wretchedness in men which by man is inconceivable and immeasurable. But the groans have not drowned the songs, the travelling in pain has not prevented the leaping for joy. Does human misery darken the sun, or deprive the moon of her lustre? does it rob the stars of their brightness, or the sky of its brilliance? does it destroy the myriads of happy creatures which crowd the air in a spring noon, or the innumerable fishes which sport in our rivers and lakes? does it silence the song of the birds, and stop the varied music of the woods? does it destroy the hum of the bee, or the babbling of the brook? What cheerful sound has it silenced? what fair form has it defaced? what bright colour has it obliterated? what glorious combination of sounds and forms and colours has it destroyed? Man is vile—as saith the poet, as saith the Scripture, as saith history, as saith observation, as saith experience; but man alone is vile. And though man be vile, beauteous objects and fair colours and musical sounds gratify him; and with a return of the most pleasant and beauteous of the seasons, there is an up-springing of gladness in the soul. Can God be miserable? Is he wretched? Does he afflict willingly, and grieve the children of men? Every spring flower, every spring sound, is like a gospel from the happy God.

6. The combination and co-operation of influences in the spring season are illustrations of the wisdom and power of God. “Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it,”—in the margin, “after thou hadst made it to desire rain.” The

dryness of the early part of spring works together with moisture and with spring rains to promote the fruitfulness of the earth. All objects and all phenomena in creation have an end and purpose, toward the realization of which there is a natural tendency. This arrangement has been ordained by the wisdom of God, and is sustained by his almighty power. Wisdom and power are essential in those who are called to govern. And there is unspeakable peace and comfort in the assurance that the God with whom we have to do is the God only wise, and the God Almighty.

7. The provision made in spring for a present and future supply of food exhibits the benevolence of God: "Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it." Sustenance of some kind or other would seem on some grounds to be the due of man. In this case, however, the quality and abundance and character of the provision may all afford scope for the display of goodness. The support of a prodigal child, however, is a matter not of debt, but of grace. God made man for himself, and when man began to live for his own self, he forfeited all claim upon God's bountifulness. A garden full of flowers, an orchard full of heavily-laden fruit-trees, a field of golden corn, are living and strong rebukes to human ungodliness. As the produce of the earth to our wants, so should be the work and worship, the character and conduct of men, to the satisfaction and joy of God. But we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, and it is this failure on our part which so exalts the divine loving-kindness, "who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever."¹

8. The abundant life and beauty, and the rich increase of the earth in the spring season, reveal the fulness of God.

¹ Psalm cxxxvi. 25.

Taught by the works of his hands, we must say, His knowledge is infinite ; His wisdom is infinite ; His power is infinite ; His skill as a Creator is infinite ; His bountifulness as a provider is infinite. Each kingdom in the material universe is so rich in objects that we cannot but feel that God is infinite. Yet these are but parts of his ways. God is more full than his wide, wide world ; far richer than the earth, though the earth be full of his wealth.

9. The season of spring abounds in symbols and pictures of spiritual objects and of Christian facts. The budding and blossoming of innumerable trees illustrates the silent and beautiful, yet unostentatious fruitfulness of true religious principle, especially of Christian love toward God and toward man. The progress of living development shows forth the gentle and irresistible progress of true spiritual life : first buds, then blossoms ; first blossoms, then fruit :—first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. The piercing of the earth by countless seed-plants, shows the force of true life in overcoming all obstacles and breaking through all impediments.

The change from barrenness to fertility, from deformity to beauty, from apparent death to manifest life, shows forth the frequent changes which take place in this life, from sorrow to joy, from sackcloth to beautiful garments, and indicates the future resurrection, and the translation which will be effected from time to immortality, and from earth to heaven. Whatever is bright in the spring is a mirror reflecting higher and better and more enduring objects. In the kingdom which cannot be moved, there are things answering to all the phenomena of the spring, and to all the objects found in the kingdoms of vegetable and animal life on this earth.

But let us speak more practically, and less as a meditation.

1. Praise God for the spring season. And let no scientific or philosophical view of the changes involved in the spring, at all exclude God from your minds and hearts. Whatever may be the laws of these changes, God makes them. Whatever may be the forces at work, God creates, sustains, and directs them. The spring is his, with all its life and beauty and variety. Praise God for the spring; and let no false spirituality restrain you from recognising God in the material world. Moreover, mistake not pleasure in the spring for praise. There cannot be praise without pleasure, but there may be pleasure without praise.

2. Let the spring teach you the folly of anxiety. See, at this season, how God clothes the grass of the field and the flowers of the field. There is no clothing made by art and man's device comparable with this attire. Are any forms so chaste and beautiful, or any colours so bright and so fair? The grass of the field knows not God, cannot know him; loves not God, cannot love him. The grass of the field to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; yet God clothes it. And shall he not much more clothe you? you, his children; you, who can know and love and trust him; you, who can recognise his care; you, to whose salvation he has devoted his Son? The grass of the field chides and reproves us for our carefulness, and exhorts us, saying, Neither be ye of anxious mind.

3. Let the spring encourage you in broad and unrestrained prayer. He who gives to us so bountifully in the spring season, is not likely to withhold any good thing. The plenteousness of his giving is a sanction to our making known every request to God. The voices of the singing birds seem to say, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find."

4. Make all the sights and sounds of spring occasions of

communion and intercourse with God. Say in your heart always, and say in season with your lips—

“ These are thy glorious works, Parent of Good—
 Almighty ! Thine this universal frame,
 Thus wondrous fair ; thyself, how wondrous, then !
 Unspeakable ! Who sit'st above these heavens ;
 To us invisible, or dimly seen
 In these thy lowest works ; yet these declare
 Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine !”

5. God is renewing the face of the earth ; let us seek the renewing of the Holy Ghost. We may be conscious of declension in the inward spiritual life. There may be grave reason to accuse ourselves of unfruitfulness in the knowledge of God and in the service of Jesus Christ. Our character may have lost the beauty of holiness ; the fragrance of consistency may be absent from our conduct ; there may be nothing that is spiritually bright about our behaviour ; there may be but little fruit unto holiness. The fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, and faith—may be very scanty. The fruit of the lips may be absent, and the fruit of righteousness ; and we may be as trees without fruit, whose leaves have withered. A spiritual winter may be upon us, with all its frost and snow and darkness and tempest and barrenness and lifelessness and lack of living beauty ; and this spiritual winter contradicts the spring in the material world. Let us seek with deep earnestness that it may soon be said of our spiritual state, “ The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.”¹

There is a power which can renew our spiritual life, and

¹ Sol. Song ii. 11-13.

to that power let us turn with holy longing for its manifestation within us.

6. Let us learn from the spring season the firm foundation we have for hope. If God year by year can perform the miracles of spring, can anything be too hard for the Lord? and if the wondrous things he works are full of bountifulness and of beauteousness, is he likely to withhold any good thing? May this resurrection-time be a season of revived hope! Time more or less is still before us. Cheered by the spring let us sing, "Jehovah is my shepherd, I shall not want." We may be forewarned of a passing through fire and water; aroused by the spring, let us listen to his voice who saith, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."¹ Bodily infirmities may be increasing within us; cheered by the spring, let us hope that as the outward man perishes the inward man may be renewed day by day. The last enemy has to be encountered—death; let the resurrections of the spring give us hope of victory. We shall have to change our place, to change worlds; let the new creations of the spring, the Beulah-aspect of our country, remind us of the land of pure delight, and help us joyously to sing—

"There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers."

The religious state of mankind is most gloomy and depressing. Cheered by the spring, let us expect the day when the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose. Let this spring season give to us all a lesson in hope, and let it teach us to hope in God. Are we in darkness? Let us hope for

¹ Isaiah xliii. 2.

light : God is light. Are we in the midst of storms? Let us hope for a peaceful sky : God holdeth the winds in his fist. Are we conscious of spiritual barrenness? Let us hope for fruitfulness : God is the author and giver of all good things. He can plant within us the love of his name, and increase within us true religion. Come, O fertilizing rain ; come, O life-breathing wind ; come, O genial sunshine ; come, O refreshing dew ! Come to our minds, come to our hearts, come to our whole spiritual nature, and bring in the spring season of Christian life, bring in the days of renewing and the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

The state of our mind toward God affects largely our views of the material world. Of an enlightened Christian it has been well said—

“ He looks abroad into the varied field
 Of nature, and though poor perhaps, compared
 With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
 Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
 His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
 And the resplendent rivers ; his to enjoy
 With a propriety that none can feel,
 But who, with filial confidence inspired,
 Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
 And, smiling, say, ‘ My Father made them all !’
 Are they not his by a peculiar right,
 And by an emphasis of interest his,
 Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
 Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
 With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
 That plann’d, and built, and still upholds a world
 So clothed with beauty, for rebellious man ?”

If ye be unreconciled to God, I beseech you be reconciled to him, and then all things in the material world will become new to you. They will be yours in a new sense. They will suggest new ideas, and awaken new sentiments, and beget new hopes, and impart new impulses, and be one means of frequently renewing the life of the living God within you.

him who is the word of God and the image of God. But we cannot afford to be deaf to any voice which may teach us, or blind to any object which may instruct us. While, therefore, we look unto and look upon Jesus the Son of God, we will also at his bidding "consider the lilies."

We have heard men speak as though they thought that Jesus Christ would be jealous of consideration directed to other objects. While all objects are kept in their proper place, and while no one object is excluded for the sake of another, observation, attention, and appreciation are more likely to please the Saviour than to displease him. We are sure we shall not displease him by considering the thoughts and lessons suggested by flowers; and I trust when we have finished our meditation we shall not find ourselves at a distance from Jesus Christ and his Father, but nearer to them both. Making for our present purpose "the lilies of the field" representatives of all flowers, we remark:

1. The lilies of the field, as God's workmanship, reveal the fountain of life and being. Flowers taken alone cannot make manifest to us the depth and breadth of that fountain, but they may show us its quality. A cup of bright and sparkling water brought to us from a well tells us nothing of the quantity of water in that well, and nothing concerning the force of the spring or springs constituting the well; but even a cup of cold and pure water may demonstrate that the well is pure. In like manner, flowers show nothing of boundless might and of high wisdom, but they do reveal the calm beauty of the source whence all living things flow. It is often said that there cannot be gross vice in a man who, delighting in flowers, cultivates them. May we not, in harmony with this remark, observe that there can be nothing harsh or hard or repulsive in the God who has made the lilies of the field?

2. The lilies of the field embody and express divine conceptions—thoughts and ideas of God. The image of every flower was in the mind of the Creator before creation. He *designed* the lilies of the field and the glorious company of their kindred. He designed form and colour, root, stem, leaves, bud, and bloom. Flowers come to us not only out of the life-giving ability of God, but also out of the form-designing power of God. Who, in his right mind, can think of the form and fragrance of flowers as undesigned? If this be accident, and if so-called accident can produce this, then verily accident is God. Not more certainly have paintings and sculpture been preconceived by the artists, and buildings of renown designed by the architects, than flowers have been in the first instance mental creations by God.

3. The lilies of the field are God's workmanship. In the fine arts the conceiver is the worker. In other departments one designs and plans, and others execute. Flowers are the work of God's fingers. The first of every kind is a distinct creation, with seed in itself, and the rest the offspring of this seed. The seed is the second cause. God is the first cause. The laws of life and growth are God's mode of working, but in these laws there is a strong, skilful, living hand. There are rules of working in every handicraft, but no man denies the existence of the craftsman, because his productions are made by the established and recognised laws of his craft, and by tools adapted to the materials upon which he works, and to the object which he has before him. By laws of production and by various agents, God brings forth flowers; but they are still his workmanship. As salvation, including regeneration and sanctification, restores man to his primitive character, so, it may be, the cultivation of flowers develops, not some fresh floral features, but the primitive and original design.

4. The lilies of the field are God's care. This is not manifest to the eye of the body. No man, like Adam, has seen or heard the Lord God in any garden. And sometimes things happen which tend to exclude the idea and sense of God's care. The scythe of the mower cuts down the flowers. The wind passes over the flower and it is gone, and the place thereof knoweth it no more. The flower is consumed by some animal. A careless foot treads it down. Some hand—perhaps a wanton hand—plucks it. The flower has not grown without human culture. And thus, that which has reared the flower, and that which has cut short its day, alike hide the care of God. But care does not involve perpetual existence, or freedom even from that kind of injury which terminates being. In the providential sense there are no wild flowers. There are children without father and mother, or with evil fathers and mothers, who are destitute of human care; but there are no flowers without divine care. And the proof of divine care is in their perfection. "They toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The flowers which man has not touched are the most beautiful illustrations of the all-sufficient care of God. How perfect and unassailable the inference, "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

5. The lilies of the field exhibit God's bountifulness. All flowers, alike of the field and of the garden, render some ordinary service—are of some use. They furnish food, medicine, clothing, shelter, to innumerable living things. And they render in part this service to man. But are they not created, in part at least, to be pleasant to the eye? Surely they are made to be things of beauty and

sources of joy. God does not provide for us according to the rigid rule of that which is necessary. He adds to that which is necessary that which is pleasant to the senses and agreeable to the soul. The cup of supply is not only filled, it runs over. There is no waste in God's providence, but there is no niggardliness. Not an atom has ever been lost, but the earth as a dwelling for man is full of God's riches.

6. The lilies of the field are propagated and developed by the working of various natural laws. There is a tendency in some minds to look only on the hard and rigorous side of law. But law is good. It secures many and great advantages. And we may transfer our remark to moral law. The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. The morning dawns, the sun shines, spring takes the place of winter, the earth is fruitful, flowers bloom, and the lilies of the field grow, according to law. Some men magnify natural laws into a god, and others degrade moral laws into an irksome and unrighteous yoke. The moral law of God, obeyed will bring forth nothing but love. To speak evil of any laws which God has made is to speak evil of God.

7. The lilies of the field are parts of a perfect whole. They sustain a relation with the whole earth, and with all that therein is, and they are in harmony with the entire creation. Their life, their growth, their form, their colour, are all in concord. There is nothing which they contradict, nothing with which they clash. They are one string in a harp of myriad strings, a harp in perfect tune. They are one colour or hue in a rainbow of myriad colours and shades of colour. They are a constellation of sweet influences in a firmament filled with stars. The key-note of creation is in the flowers, a note neither too high nor too low for us men, but adapted to allure into singing the heart of every

human child of God who has been reconciled unto his Father.

8. The lilies of the field show us a sense of beauty in the nature of God, and a satisfaction in its expression. To God, objects which are capable of being beautiful would not be "very good" unless they were clad in beauty. This is one reason of sin being so hateful to God. It is moral deformity, spiritual hideousness and ugliness. There is a beauty in holiness which is one of the divine attractions to it. And is not the divine sense of beauty the reason for the employment of the most attractive objects in creation to represent the Son of God the Saviour of the world, and to illustrate that salvation which is by faith in his name?

9. The lilies of the field are what they are through various affinities and relationships. They are the children of the sun. His beams travel more than ninety millions of miles to cherish and to colour them. They are the children of the earth, and are brought up on her lap, and are nourished at her bosom. They are the children of the rain and of the dew and of the air. The flowers have several subordinate parents, each of which hath its service, and performs its part. In this condition of floral life we see one of the conditions of our own existence. We have a divine Father, and we have human parents—mother and father. We have intercourse with heaven, and are resident on earth. We have to do with things spiritual and material, temporal and eternal. We are moved from within, and we are influenced from without. Various agencies and influences work together to array the lilies of the field, and several forces are ever working upon our human nature. A true Christian is a pilgrim on earth with citizenship in heaven, a child of God while a son of man, the workmanship of God, though instructed and comforted and helped by his fellows. As

sun and earth and rain and dew work together to produce the lilies of the field, so all things work together for good to them that love God.

10. The lilies of the field are supposed to find in the nature of man that which will respond to their attractiveness. They are made, in part at least, for man's eye and for man's soul. If we were that which we ought to be, we should need no voice to bid us "consider the lilies." But the creation of flowers, and the injunction before us, show that there is in man a power of appreciation—asleep sometimes, but there—half-dead sometimes, but certainly there.

Discipleship to Jesus Christ does not shut our eyes to the earth, or close our hearts to the material works of God. He who follows Christ will certainly consider the lilies of the field. The tendency of Bible teaching is in the direction of leading us to make much of God's world, and to think little of man's world. The chief writers take their illustrations and metaphors from the material works of God. So that, in order to despise or even neglect what is called nature, we must separate ourselves from the letter and spirit of biblical teaching. The sun is brighter for being used by the prophets as a symbol of my Saviour. The vine is more graceful since I heard the Great Teacher say, "I am the true vine." The grass is more verdant since Jesus employed it to illustrate the minute and complete providence of God.

11. The lilies of the field may teach us freedom from care, and from morbid self-consciousness. They are born, and they grow. They toil not, and they grow. They spin not, and they grow. They do nothing for their growth, and have no sense of growth, yet they grow. They spin not, yet are they gloriously arrayed. Without doing anything, they are as perfect and beautiful as they can be. Unlike the lilies, we are called to toil, and we are under a divine

commission, which requires us to spin. Unlike the lilies, we are conscious of existence, and have certain responsibilities with reference to life. But, like the lilies, we need much done for us which we cannot do for ourselves; and for all this we are required to trust God. That which God has to do for us he does perfectly, without our thought and care. Let us not direct our mind to that which belongs to God's thought. Let us not try to touch with our hands that which is the exclusive work of God's fingers.

Anxiety can do nothing that is good, but it may effect much mischief. It cannot produce anything that is good. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" It cannot beneficially alter anything. "Thou canst not make one hair white or black." It is not in itself a power of good. It is not power to pray; it is not power to work; it is not power to think; it is not power to judge; it is not power to discriminate and determine. But it is power for much mischief. It blinds the eye, so that there is no seeing of God, nor is there any vision of heaven. It makes the ear deaf, so that the voice of God's promises, and the voice of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, cannot be heard. It palsies the tongue in the direction of praise. It destroys all taste and relish for the abundant provisions of God's mercy. It spoils all present blessings. It wastes the passing moment. It encumbers to-day with that which belongs to the morrow. It forms unwise projects, and begets scaring dreams. It is as foolish as though the lilies were to begin to spin. O, ye anxious ones, consider the lilies.

IV

“THE LITTLE FOXES.”

“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.”—SOLOMON'S SONG ii. 15.

IN a land of vineyards, these words would be universally understood and completely appreciated. There it is known that the fox in the vineyard is exceedingly destructive. The food of that animal is not merely flesh, but honey and fruits, particularly grapes; and the young foxes not merely devour the fruit, but by their sportiveness, and by the action of their teeth on the bark of the vine, destroy as much as they devour.

The habits of the fox increase the mischief. Instead of roaming, as some animals, without any certain place of rest, he fixes the bounds of his habitation, choosing a cave or den at a convenient distance from those places which will furnish most substance for plunder; and from this hiding-place and watch-tower united, he exercises his acuteness, ingenuity, prudence, and circumspection, in the capture of whatever is fitted to be his prey. The well-known voraciousness of the fox gives breadth to the mischief, and his cunning renders the application of means of defence almost impossible. So that the husbandman of the vineyard regards the fox as one of his greatest enemies.

These facts in Natural History are employed to induce the subjects of the greater than Solomon to remove all obstructions to his kingdom from their own hearts, and from those fellowships in the church of Christ to which they may belong. Let us think of Jesus Christ as here speaking. Various forms of evil are the foxes; insidious evil, the little foxes. Christ's disciples are the vines. The tender grapes are either the earlier and feebler manifestations of religious life, or the more valuable and precious; and the spoiling of the vines is the checking and marring those holy and divine developments.

We will consider the text—I. As addressed to the individual. II. As a direction to religious fellowships.

I. As addressed to the individual.

1. The evils, the capture of which is here urged, are such as the following:—Ostentation—the spirit that leads men to give alms that may be seen of men; to pray, that it may be said, "Behold he prays;" and to be very particular that their circumspection may become the talk of a street or of a town. Concealment—the temper that prompts men to try to prevent their light shining by placing it under a bushel. The easily-offended and unforgiving spirit—by which allied hearts are moved to a distance from each other, and kept separate. Fear of man and men-pleasing—by which the soul is snared into neglect of duty, and into the occupation of wrong positions. Anxiety—by which the mind is distracted and the heart robbed of peace. A longing for treasure upon earth—by which the religious sight is confused and the spirit darkened. That judging of others—by which our beams are made motes and others' motes made beams. That finding our life and burying our dead, and bidding them farewell who are at our house—which involves a looking back and an unfitness for the kingdom of God. Beside

these evils, we may mention, All such plausible errors in doctrine and specious deviations from truth as affect principle and conduct; injustice in the things that are least; trifling omissions of duty; all pleasures and indulgences producing moral uneasiness, and especially all doubtful actions and courses, those deeds and paths about which the conscience is uneasy and the spirit timid, about which the mind is not made up, and in the performance or pursuit of which there is, at least, a suspicion of the divine displeasure and frown.

These are the *little* foxes. In addition to these, there is that fox, Herod, the persecutor, whose threatenings destroy the activity of some, and whose power leads captive their faithfulness. And that fox, Alexander, the coppersmith and the caviller, whose work is contradiction, and whose end the marring of sound Christian influence. And that fox, Demas, who, forsaking the heavenly kingdom for the present world, draws unstable souls after him. And the foxes, Hymenæus and Philetus, whose profane and vain babblings eat into the listener as a gangrene. These are the foxes that spoil the vines.

2. The good which may be marred is of this kind:—The subjects of Christ's kingdom are born from above: we may expect in them heavenly-mindedness. They are born of God: and we may look to them for godliness. They are created anew by Christ Jesus: and we may expect to see Christ-likeness. The children of light walk in light. The children of love walk in love. The disciples of Christ follow Christ. The tree is made good, and the fruit is good; and the fruit, in this case, is the fruit of righteousness, sown in peace of them that make peace. It is the fruit of the Spirit, in all goodness and righteousness and truth—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meek-

ness and temperance. It is fruit unto holiness. This vineyard is planted in a very fruitful hill ; God has fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in it, and made a wine-press ; and God looks that it should bring forth grapes. Herein is the Father glorified, that this vineyard brings forth much fruit ; not grapes of gall, and clusters that are bitter, but grapes sweeter than honey and the honeycomb—fruit of holiness unto God and fruit to everlasting life.

3. This good may be thus marred:—The pursuit of religious information may be checked. The attainment of divine knowledge by experience may be hindered. The judgment may be perverted or corrupted. The memory may be burdened with remembrance of sin. The conscience may be blunted or defiled. The affections may be corrupted or divided. Godly action may be impeded. The energy of holy principle may be impaired. The bloom of spiritual peace and rest may be removed. The enamel of character may be broken. The lustre of reputation may be dimmed.

4. Such mischief ought to be prevented or cured. Take the foxes. Pray in secret, and give in secret. Let your light shine. Forgive a brother his trespasses. Fear not them which kill the body. Cast all your care on him who careth for you. Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth. Judge not. Let the dead bury their dead. Hold the faith and a good conscience. Do nothing by which others are offended and made weak. Defy the persecutor. Withstand the opposer. Withdraw from the backslider. Take the foxes. Make impending evil captive, and, if possible, destroy it.

Take us the foxes. Christ's Father is the lord of the vineyard : take them for his sake. Christ himself is the husbandman : take them for his sake. The Holy Ghost

is the vine-dresser: take them for his sake. Christ owns this vineyard on the title of laying down his life, and shedding his precious blood for it: if not for your sake, for his, take the foxes that spoil the vines. But for this vineyard, the earth would yield no increase to God. To correct universal barrenness, take the foxes. Our vines have *tender* grapes. The fruit of human science is not the fruit of holiness. The fruit of good social institutions is not fruit unto God. There are no results like those secured by Christ in his followers. Take, then, the foxes that spoil the vines.

II. Contemplate this text as addressed to the churches of Christ.

1. The foxes in any congregation of believing men are such evils as these:—Ill-humour, whether arising from the body, or from circumstances, or from any dominant evil passion—that mood which makes a jaundiced eye and an itching ear, and which will not see good, but is determined to discover evil. Suspicion—the opposite temper to the charity that thinketh no evil, the spirit that sees nothing but whited sepulchres, and platters clean but on the outside. Distrust—the spirit that has no friend or counsellor, but saith deliberately, "All men are liars." Self-importance—the thinking too highly of oneself, and too meanly of others, instead of estimating others and oneself soberly. Carelessness and disorder—by which the sweetest ointment is spoiled, dead flies being allowed to abide in it, and by which the most magnificent music is marred, through the performance being slovenly in the execution. The foxes are such as these:—Doubtful opinions urged as though they were divine decrees. Inexpedient action cast as stumbling-blocks in the path of the weak. Needless and invidious comparisons between individual Christians and ministers. The holding

tenaciously to what is absolutely lawful, yet relatively hurtful. Undue carefulness for the good opinion and continued affection of earthly kindred. Murmuring and fault-finding. Allowing another man's conscience to judge our liberty. Acting as though the body of Christ were but one member instead of many, and saying to the foot or the hand, "I have no need of thee;" the refusal to recognise the religion of others, because their experience is not one with our own; living to oneself, instead of bearing others' burdens;—these are the little foxes that spoil the vines. Then there are the foxes of malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies and evil-speaking, especially evil-speaking, which is like one of Samson's foxes, to the tails of which he tied burning firebrands when he sent them into the harvest-fields of the Philistines. The slanderer, the backbiter, and the fault-finder, are foxes carrying the firebrands of hell, and doing the devil's work in the vineyard of God. Striving about words, foolish and unlearned questions, enticing words, the principles of the concision, are evils in the same class. Then there is the fox heresy, and the fox schism. There are cunning men lying in wait to deceive, and men who hold the truth in unrighteousness; unruly talkers, men causing divisions; the carrying the affairs of the church before the tribunals of the world; winds of doctrine; preaching and teaching out of envy and strife;—these are the foxes that spoil the vines.

So far as these evils have influence, they check the life of God in the soul of the man, and thereby damage the fellowship. As a congregation consists of individuals, so the character of a church is created by the moral and spiritual attributes of persons. Whatever injures the individual, mars the communion.

The evils named prevent mutual manifestation and co-operation, fellowship and ministration. Now all these are

essential to true church fellowship. Only to the extent to which Christians show their Christianity to each other are they as Christians united. And upon this union depend co-operation, fellowship, and ministration. Blot these out of a church, and you have the mere name of fellowship; the evil is greater, the vine is of the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah, their grapes are grapes of gall, and clusters that are bitter. Or if the evil be not thus terrible, the vine planted and fenced brings forth wild grapes. And the change that passes over a fellowship may be described in the words of the Psalm, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the rivers. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it."¹

To prevent this spoliation, take the foxes. Apart from their influence, "the vines with a tender grape give a good smell,"—"they flourish." But thus spoiled, you have barrenness for fertility, and wasting for beauty.

Take the foxes. This is one with Christ's precept, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee."² Paul's directions and John's are in harmony with the text: "Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."³ "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may

¹ Psalm lxxx. 8-13. ² Matt. v. 29, 30. ³ Rom. xvi. 17, 20.

be ashamed."¹ "Refuse profane and old wives' fables."² "Avoid profane and vain babblings, and opposition of science falsely so called."³ "Shun them."⁴ "Foolish and unlearned questions avoid."⁵ "Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law."⁶ "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."⁷ "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."⁸ What is all this but saying, "Take the foxes that spoil the vines"?

Jesus Christ not merely saves individuals, but he forms those souls into a church and a kingdom. He wishes them to live together, to suffer together, to rejoice together, and to act together. Out of the holy ones Christ forms an assembly of saints and of the upright. The disciples of Jesus are not a mass, but a body. They are related as the members of a family. They are provided for as a flock in one fold and by one shepherd. With many pleasant plants Christ forms one husbandry. By many habitations of God he forms one holy city. With many separate stones he constructs one temple. With varied material he frames one tabernacle. With numerous vines he plants one vineyard. And he who has planted the vineyard does not like to see his portion trodden under foot, and his pleasant portion made a desolate wilderness. He expects to receive the fruit of it.

Take us then, saith he, the foxes; govern the tongue,

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 14. ² 1 Tim. iv. 7. ³ 1 Tim. vi. 20. ⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 16.
⁵ 2 Tim. ii. 23. ⁶ Titus iii. 9. ⁷ 2 John 9, 10. ⁸ 1 Cor. v. 11.

cleanse the hands, purify the heart. Have light in your countenance and salt in yourselves, that you may live together and act together with joy and with profit. And if an evil tongue, a defiled hand, or any other evil threaten mischief to your fellowship, take the foxes that spoil the vines.

Real godly union is worth preserving. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, life for evermore."¹ "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."² Fellowship is not only pleasant, but it is helpful: God blesses it, and so far as it is true and godly it fulfils one object for which Jesus Christ travailed in soul.

We remark in conclusion—

1. That individual life and church life are not maintainable apart from carefulness and exertion. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought."³ As with the body so with the soul; life moves on the pivot of repair and waste, danger and protection. You expend your knowledge and require more. You exhaust a principle and need another. You waste one motive and require a fresh impulse. The will is weak and the heart is faint, and you must renew the energy of both by spiritual food. Real

¹ Psalm cxxxiii.

² Malachi iii. 16, 17.

³ 2 John, 8.

religion has nothing mechanical in it. It is all life. It does not proceed on a principle of perpetual motion. It meets resistance and must resist in turn, or it will stop. It is in incessant friction, and must be protected, or it will wear out. A Christian must, in order to live, eat bread of life and drink water of life. In order to labour, he must renew his strength. And more: the fowler sets snares for him; there are terrors by night, arrows fly by day; in the darkness the pestilence walks, by day the destruction wastes. There are stones of stumbling, and lions and adders, and young lions and dragons in his path. He needs to be borne up. He wants a secret place, a refuge, a fortress, a covert, a defence. And he must look for the refuge; run to it, enter it, and dwell in it. Near every vineyard are foxes, and the foxes must be taken. Some cannot see this because of false doctrine; they have perverted certain words of God to the destruction of their own sense of responsibility; others do not see this because they have not looked for it, or taken heed when it has been presented; and others will not see it because they desire to be at ease in Zion. But let us walk in the light of the advice and caution before us.

2. To such carefulness and effort we have the strongest inducement. Your labour is not in vain; God cares for you. If you look to him, he will satisfy thy soul in drought and make thee as a watered garden. Abide in Christ, and you will bring forth much fruit. Do these things, and you shall never fall. It profits you to be careful and to be earnest, and about this only need you be anxious. You have not to find means whereby to live, you have only to use means which God has given you, that you may live. The spirit of your life is in Christ Jesus, the true and gracious and ever-living Christ Jesus. Abide in Christ. And when tempted to part from Christ, resist the temptation. If it be in some

small duty to abandon your great principles, take that fox ; if to refuse the cross, take that fox ; if to despise divine discipline or to faint under God's corrections, take that fox ; if to accept peace as the world gives it instead of peace as Christ bequeathed it, take that fox ; if to lessen the friction of discipleship by guile, take that fox ; if to try to serve God and mammon, take that fox ; if to rest in a mere external Christianity, take that fox ; if to isolate and separate yourself from your fellow-Christians, take that fox ; if in any way to break the unity of the spirit and to destroy the bond of peace, take that fox. And if ten thousand evils attack you, be the means of ten thousand deaths, and take all the foxes that spoil the vines. May omniscience guide us and omnipotence sustain us, and may the sympathy and tenderness of Jesus cheer us ! Amen.

DWELLING IN BOOTHS.

"That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."—LEVITICUS xxiii. 43.

THIS is God's reason for appointing the Feast of Tabernacles. He directs that on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, immediately after harvest, a seven days' feast should be celebrated. As part of this celebration, the people are required to carry boughs of trees—palm-trees, thick trees, and willows of the brook. God requires, also, that the people—perhaps only the men—should leave their dwellings, and dwell in booths seven days. In the text God gives his reason for this requirement. Throughout the wandering in the wilderness, the children of Israel abode in tents. No house of timber or stone or brick protected them; yet the sun did not smite them by day, nor the moon by night. The fabric of the booth was sufficient for their protection. "God made the children of Israel to dwell in booths,"—made, in the sense of causing to dwell safely. And God would have the children of the people who dwelt in booths keep this fact in remembrance, generation after generation.

In reading the book of Leviticus, nothing strikes us more than the minuteness of the instructions and directions given

by God about the whole duty of the people; and in perusing the record of the institution of festivals, one cannot fail to notice the large and specific provision which is made for keeping certain national events in remembrance. There are lessons here which we may learn with immense advantage, but we must confine our observations within narrower limits, as required by the exposition of the text.

I. The text reminds us of conditions of life very like this dwelling in booths.

II. The text exhibits God as sufficient for us in the most necessitous and dangerous circumstances; and

III. The text points out a duty of remembrance which we are all liable to neglect.

1. A feeble body, answering its purpose many years, is like dwelling in booths. There are human bodies, rich in life, strong in constitution, and sound in every limb and organ. There are other bodies, poor in vital force, feeble in structure, and organically defective. But instead of these frames failing and falling, they often endure longer than the sturdier bodies, performing an amount of work, and enduring a degree of wear and tear, almost incredible. How near these bodies are to destruction, God only knows. In the hour of maternal solicitude, in the day of attack from virulent disease, and in moments of exhaustion, the balance threatens to dip on the side of death. Still the woman continues to be the fountain and the ark of life to a large family, and the man goes on to labour until threescore years and ten. A thousand strong ones fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, but death does not come nigh them. Every birthday from the first anniversary has seemed as though it must be the last; but they will be gathered to their graves full of years, as a shock of corn fully ripe. The cedar has fallen, but the fir-tree stands; the flower of the

grass has withered, but some of the most tender blades survive. Verily, looking at the frailty of the body, God makes some of us to dwell in booths.

2. Providing by slender means all that is really needful for a large family, is like dwelling in booths. Lodging, food, raiment, and other necessary things, are, by innumerable heads of families, provided out of not pounds per week, but shillings per week, and shillings, in some cases, in number below the score. How it is that the children appear so clean and tidy and well nourished, and the home so orderly, is a marvel of human providence ! The father, as a young man, spent almost all his earnings upon himself. Marriage and the advent of the first-born, seemed to consume the last penny ; but child after child has come into the world, and there has been bread enough. Yes, I may finish the quotation ; not only bread enough, but "to spare ;" to spare for the aged parent, and for the needy neighbour, and for the hungry stranger. I have taken my illustration from one class ; but tradesmen understand slender means, and professional men understand slender means, and many know what slender means are whose resources are not suspected of being scant. God makes many as to temporal means to dwell in booths.

3. A morbidly sensitive spirit kept sound, is like dwelling in booths. To the border-line of madness many come who are not permitted to cross. Jealousy with a deeper jaundice, anger and hatred with a little more fire, fancy a little more mischievous, fear a little stronger, thought on one subject a little more intense, would speedily conduct such across that border. But in spite of work and sorrow and care, those of whom we speak, though ever liable to mental disturbance still abide sane and sound in mind. That which keeps such from melancholy or frenzy, is not a wall of brick or stone or

marble, but a few yards of canvas or of fabric of hair. God makes many as to mental soundness to dwell in booths.

4. A nature prone to gross evil and kept from the power of temptation, is like dwelling in booths. There are men and women in whose constitution the flesh is a large element. They have strong animal propensities and passions. There is that in their nature which inclines to gluttony and drunkenness and sensuality of various kinds. But the body is kept under; there is no making a god of the belly; there is no being drunk with wine; there is no yielding to the lusts of the flesh. There have been seasons in which those of whom we speak were as nigh to being overcome as they could be without being actually subdued, but they have kept themselves pure. There are also men and women with constitutional tendencies of another kind. There is an innate disposition to lie, to steal, to curse, and to swear. Continually are such persons about to lie and to rob and to blaspheme, but the hands are restrained from stealing, and the lips from evil-speaking. Are there not characters which seem to be ready for any mischief, buoyant, rollicking, and high-spirited, but which nevertheless are hid in a pavilion from much evil? They appear as though they might do any wicked thing, yet so far as morality is concerned, they are kept in the right way. These, too, are amongst those whom God makes to dwell in booths.

5. A church preserved in peace and unity, with the elements of evil within it and evil influences around it, is another example of God making to dwell in booths. There may be a root of bitterness which does not spring up; there may be a sower of discord among brethren whose seed falls by the wayside; there may be a Diotrephes who cannot gain the pre-eminence; there may be some Alexander who cannot do much evil; there may be a desire to be

the greatest which does not become a strife for the mastery. While human nature is what it is, you cannot have association of any kind without the elements of mischief and the seeds of dissolution. Where there is continuance and unity and peace in a religious community, we have another illustration of God making to dwell in booths.

6. To have lived in a day of small things, and gradually to have come into a day of great things, is to have been made to dwell in booths. The once contracted business now extensive, the once limited profession now a wide and broad practice, and the once tiny house now a large establishment, are illustrations.

Let us now remark, *secondly*, that the text exhibits God as sufficient for us in the most necessitous and dangerous circumstances. "I *made* the children of Israel to dwell in booths" does not mean only, "I appointed that they should so dwell and I ordained it," but "I made them dwell safely, secure from evil, and peacefully quiet from the fear of evil; I made them dwell safely and peacefully in booths, as though in ceiled houses or in strongly-built palaces." In like manner God sustains a feeble body until life's hard work is fully wrought; and God blesses the use of slender means, so that the bread is enough and the water is sure; and God protects a morbid spirit, so that it is not radically disordered; and God keeps back from the power of temptation; and God preserves a church from evil; and God nurses the day of small things until it becomes a day of great things. There are days of small things which continue days of small things, there are churches troubled and defiled and destroyed, there are multitudes who succumb to temptation, there are those who from being morbid have become insane, there are families pining in hunger, there are graves which hide human bodies prematurely worn out; but where God

the Lord thy God brought thee out thence."¹ This is repeated several times.² "Thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God led thee."³ "Remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt."⁴ "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations."⁵ In almost every book of the Old Testament scriptures do we find words like these, and where we have not the same words there is other language with the same signification. Thus: "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you."⁶ God says so much about keeping our past mercies (which, indeed, are present obligations) in remembrance, that if we attach any importance to his words we cannot think lightly of the memory of his goodness.

If I mistake not, the application of this sermon has already been made. Aged women, mothers of large families and of feeble constitution, have said, "God has made me to dwell in booths, and I will trust him and praise him as long as I live." Mature and aged men, fathers of large households, who have provided things honest in the sight of all men, have said, "God has made me to dwell in booths, and I shall ever cast all my care on him who has so cared for me." Men and women of sensitive temperament, overwrought and pressed down beyond endurance, have said, "God has made us to dwell in booths. He knoweth our frame. He remembereth that we are dust, and like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord has pitied us." Men of middle age have looked back upon the time of youth as of exposure to fierce temptation, and remembering how they passed through unscathed, have said, "God

¹ Deut. v. 15. ² Deut. xv. 15; xvi. 12; xxiv. 18, 22.

³ Deut. viii. 2. ⁴ Deut. xvi. 3. ⁵ Deut. xxxii. 7. ⁶ Isaiah li. 1, 2.

has made us to dwell in booths, and in all future temptation we shall think of him as finding a way of escape." And members of this church, looking back upon the days in which we were few, and when our resources were small, and when our dangers were many, have said, "God has made us to dwell in booths, and we will trust in the covert of his wing for ever." This speaking of each man to himself renders almost needless any applicatory or hortatory words of the preacher. We leave each member of the congregation to his own thoughts, simply asking you often to think as guided by the text. Think of how much there is in all life, like dwelling in booths; think of this booth-life as ordained for us by God; think of this booth-life as made sufficient by God; and think of this booth-life as something to be kept in hallowed and devout remembrance. The strong in body are apt to forget the God of the body; the wealthy are apt to forget the Divine Provider; the vigorous in spirit are apt to forget the Father of Spirits; the untempted know not God as a keeper; churches sustained by law of men are apt to be independent of God. Let us avoid all such forgetfulness, and in whatsoever state we may be, let us remember the Lord our God.

VI

A CEDAR HOUSE FOR GOD'S ARK.

*Preached at the Opening of the Square Chapel, Halifax,
July 15th, 1857.*

OF late years there has been a great change in the style and general character of our houses of prayer. This change appears to me an improvement, associated as it is, moreover, with a more decent and orderly mode of conducting divine service. We children of the Puritans, in our endeavours to exhibit the things which are "true," have always been in great danger of neglecting the things that are "lovely," and in many cases have been guilty of such neglect. We have become alive to this, and are supplying the omission; and if more attention to the things that are "lovely" does not lead to the sacrifice of the things that are "true," we shall be gainers by all such changes.

Turn your eyes whithersoever you will, you see on every hand improvement. Nothing among the creations of human skill remains unchanged. No private abode is constructed as houses were built fifty years ago. There is more attention to light and fresh air, to health, convenience, and comfort. And some who, like Nehemiah, have been improving our towns and cities, with others who, like David, have been improving their dwellings, have said, "See now, we dwell in houses of cedar, but the ark of God is under

curtains." The improvement in our places of worship has arisen more from our laymen than from our ministers.

"The king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains."—2 SAMUEL vii. 2.

"Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in a house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains."—1 CHRON. xvii. 1.

These words are our text.

There are three sacred places upon this earth : home, the place in which I dwell ; the grave, the place in which my kindred and neighbours are buried ; and the house of prayer, the place in which I meet my fellow men to worship God.

Home is a sacred place ! Do any hesitate to attribute sanctity to our dwellings, and do they ascribe sacredness only to the church of God ? Reflection will conquer such hesitation. Surely the dwelling to which the bridegroom brings his bride, the place in which two, no more twain but one, set out in the journey of life together, where masculine energy and feminine gentleness first unite to form one perfect humanity, and man and woman taste the joys of Eden's Paradise ; surely the habitation in which through a wondrous mechanism of pain the pledges of mutual love come into existence, and the house to which we point saying, "This and that man were born there"—the place where children grow up as olive plants around the paternal table, where the fondest expectations of husband and wife are realized, and the best hopes of the mother are lost in fruition, where the babe becomes a child, the child a youth, and the youth a man ; and where the parents increase in strength until the meridian of life, and then decline until they sink into the grave—surely the scene of marriage and birth, of growth, decline, and death, is a most sacred place !

Home, sweet home! many can sing, but home, sacred home, we all must confess. Be it ever so lowly and humble, ever so destitute of material comforts, home is one of earth's sacred places!

The place where men dwell is the local habitation of a creature originally made in the image of God; of a being for whom, as fallen, God was manifest in flesh, and for whom Christ died; of a creature whose destiny is immortality, and whose every work and word create waves in the ocean of eternity. The place where men dwell is a place which devils watch with horrid malignity, where angels minister with fond delight, to which the Saviour comes whenever invited, over which the Holy Ghost—if the home contain an altar—hovers like a peaceful dove. The place where men dwell is a place in which God is always to be found, where I may always see him and always speak to him, where he watches me without sleeping and works for me without resting, and it is a place in which I am building up my heaven, or digging out my hell. The place where we dwell is a place we can never forget, a place whose influence upon us will be abiding as eternity itself.

Home! sacred home! We all show by various unintentional but intelligible signs that we feel it to be sacred. Do we not protect it from the elements, and from the thief, and from the foot of the stranger, and from the eye of the curious? and as we have opportunity, do we not all adorn it? I see the poor sprinkle the floor of the home with clean sand, scour the wood or brick with pure water, polish every inch of metal, make the face of every piece of furniture to shine, hang the walls with such pictures and fill the shelves with such ornaments as their hard-earned pennies can secure, place flowers in the window and on the table, and show as much zeal in purifying and adorning it as the

Hebrews displayed in removing the leaven when the Pass-over drew nigh. I see the rich construct their abodes by the science of the architect and by the skill of the artist. They furnish with choice woods, costly fabrics, and precious metals, and they try to clothe the home with beauty from the chimney to the door-step, from the cornice to the plinth, from the hall to the chamber, from the footstool to the mirror and to the instrument of music. Every man feels his home to be, some say a castle, but we say a sanctuary, and according to his ability he promotes its comfort and pleasantness. Those who do not care for home are marked and talked of as lacking in right principle and good feeling. That our homes may be well kept, God has placed woman in the centre as chief minister, commanding her to be a keeper at home, and endowing her with the genius of true and tender love. And when the trail of the serpent polluted the home, God sent his Son to this world, not only to repair his own broken altars, but to purify our dwellings from all unrighteousness and unrest, to stand at our doors and knock, and when the door is opened to say, "Peace be to this house!" Home! sacred home! Home! eventful home! God-made home! Woman-kept home! Christ-saved home! Every man, according to his ability, cannot but build thee of cedar!

The grave is a sacred place.

" I like that ancient Saxon phrase, which calls
The burial-ground God's acre! It is just;
It consecrates each grave within its walls,
And breathes a benison o'er the sleeping dust.

" God's acre! Yes, that blessed name imparts
Comfort to those who in the grave have sown
The seed, that they have garnered in their hearts,
Their bread of life, alas! no more their own.

We all feel the burial-place t
instinct we turf the grave, build
garlands to the tomb. The sancti
from the sacredness of the home.
our home relics; we deposit the d
sow the seed of the cedars or firs
home plantation.

But our text speaks only of th
and of the place where we worship
a sacred place. There "we pr
acknowledge thee to be the Lo
where prayer is wont to be mad
confessional of broken and contrite
for preaching Christ Jesus our
eternal truth. It is the retreat of
It is an upper room for the comm
the fountain stands open for sin a
the feast of eternal love is spread
heaven are ever speaking. Ther
careless is arrested, the judgment
and the vain imaginations of the
There :

of the godly. There we who are Christ's ministers preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; there we baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; there we break the bread of the Lord's Supper; there we bless those whom in the ordinance of marriage God has joined together. Glorious things are spoken of the house of God! Have not our hearts burned within us there? There this and that man were born again. Emphatically of such a place it may be said, "The Lord is there;" "Surely this is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven;"¹ "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!"²

Between the home and the house of God there are points of connection and of resemblance; but there are points of difference in favour of the house of God. In both places marriage is consummated and realized, but in the church the bridegroom is the Son of God. Both are places of birth, but the births in the church are not of the flesh but of the Spirit. Both places are scenes in which the joys and activities of life are manifested, but the life manifested in the church is life everlasting. Both are the place of death, but the death which occurs in the church is the death of sin. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God."³ Then, shall we dwell in a house of cedar, and suffer the ark of the Lord to remain under curtains? But although the associations which clothe the house of prayer are more hallowed than those which cling to the home, there is no great moral or spiritual distance between them. The place where we dwell and the place in which we worship are closely connected; the cares which we accumulate in the home we cast upon God

¹ Gen. xxviii. 17. ² Psalm lxxxiv. 1. ³ Psalm lxxxvii. 2, 3.

in the church: the requests which originate in it we make known to God in the church: the joys we of at home are brought for an odour of a sweet the church. At home we learn the song, here we there we tune the harp, here we play upon it. home we wear the garb of a mourner, in the church off our sackcloth and gird ourselves with gladne bring into the house of God home cares, home and home joys; and we take from the house renewed life for home duties, fresh love for home with quickened hope and purified gladness. As v the place where we dwell we cannot but think of t where we worship, and to the extent that our house we shall be dissatisfied that the ark of God is under

Ideas of order, fitness, and beauty are eterna divine nature. The fitting, the beautiful, and the dwelt in God when God existed alone, before m: or spirit. And so soon as God created, it was mani he delights in adaptation, order, and beauty.

Order is heaven's first law, and beauty heaven's law; so that it is scarcely possible to worship habitable part of the globe without worshipping beautiful house. The chosen spot shall be a val hill side, the bank of a river, the shore of a lake, a grove or wood or meadow; but it will be more beautiful. God always puts man in a house o Man sometimes puts God's ark under curtains.

Let us with much brevity sketch the history o of true worship. The heaven of heavens is tl ancient place of worship; and if we may liken it t and use illustrations intended to represent that v spiritual and not material, we may say that the si exceedingly high mountain, so that the city stands

the clouds, in a firmament made gloriously bright by unsetting suns. The exterior of the foundation walls is garnished by all manner of precious stones. The walls of the city are jasper and the gates are pearls, the buildings are burnished gold, and the light which shines through this city is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone clear as crystal. Here, too, all the glory which pertains to a city combines with rival beauty, for through these golden streets flows a stream clear as crystal, on the banks of which grow trees whose leaves do not wither and whose fruit never fails. This is the most ancient place of worship.

The second place of worship, in the order of time, was the firmament of our earth. When God was creating the earth and these heavens, he permitted the firstborn of creation to watch him working. They first saw the earth shapeless and barren, its deep dark hollows being filled with water. They then saw these waters of death agitated, and they heard a voice say, "Let there be light."¹ They then beheld the advent of light. They also watched the Creator make an atmosphere, and saw him draw up into that atmosphere a portion of the waters which had slept in the deep places of the earth. They beheld him draw off the lower waters into beds, and stretch out continents of dry land. Then suddenly the green grass appeared on large portions of the earth, and there sprang up herbs and trees. Then the globe was placed in a system of orbs, and under the control of two great lights. The waters are now made to teem with life, and fowl are created to fly in the firmament of heaven. Living creatures creep and walk over the earth; and now air, land, and water are rich in life. As a chief work, man and woman are created—

¹ Genesis i. 3.

beautiful images of the blessed God. The angels had watched this work in silence; were we speaking of it we should say, breathless silence. Their joy has, however, been rising higher and yet higher at every stage of creation and they cannot contain it. They speak. They sing. They shout for joy. Their adoration of the Great Maker has deepened with every movement of his fingers; and they are constrained to sing, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

A beautiful place of worship this, with the gorgeous painted earth for the floor, and the blue firmament for walls and roof, in which the "morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."²

The garden of Eden, as a place of worship, was the perfection of beauty. Even outside the garden beauty reigned—in the firmament and in the ocean depths, in the grass of the valleys and in the flowers of the mountains, in the tiny insects and the largest animals, in light and shade, in dew and in sunbeams. But in paradise was the perfection of beauty. There was colour of every hue and shade, from virgin white to purple and vermilion. There were forms in endless variety, from the simple blade of grass to the complicated mammoth tree. Harmony reigned there so that colours and forms were united as melodious and harmonious sounds in a piece of music. The heavens rejoiced and the earth was glad; the fields were joyful, and all that was therein; the trees of the wood rejoiced, and the whole paradise seemed to sing. Now, here in this garden of delights, our first father worshipped; here human life first blessed God, and here the human form was first brought in godly homage.

¹ Rev. iv. 11. ² Job xxxviii. 7.

When driven from Eden, and worshipping in the open field and at the primitive altar, the worshipper was still surrounded by the glorious works of the Parent of Good. But let us look at the first place of worship which was constructed by divine direction. The children of Israel were sojourning in tents, and this house of God was a tent. But how perfectly contrived and exquisitely beautiful ! The material employed was the precious metals, the most durable wood, the most costly fabrics, and the most valuable dyes ; the workmen are inspired by the Creator to devise cunning works and to labour ; the pillars of the court and of the tent are not rude poles, but columns with chaste capitals and broad bases ; the curtains and coverings are not plain fabrics, but fabrics embroidered in divers colours and with divine forms ; the furniture is ornamented with shapes of flowers and fruits and with golden crowns ; so that there was no tent like unto the tabernacle of Israel among all the goodly tents of the tribes. It is true that this was a symbolic structure connected with a pictorial and typical dispensation ; but the symbols might have been in iron instead of gold, and in copper instead of silver.

This tent-temple served the objects of divine worship, not only in the wilderness but during the early years of Israel's settlement in Canaan. In David's time much of the tent had been lost and destroyed, and only portions of the sacred furniture were preserved. The king provided a new tent, pitched it upon Zion, and there placed the ark of God. He now builds a palace for his own occupation ; and not content with the wood of his own forests and with the skill of Hebrew workmen, he obtained cedar from Tyre, also carpenters and masons. The palace is finished, and is a meet abode for a king. While enjoying the comfort, convenience, and pleasantness of his own dwelling, it

occurred to him that the provision he had made for himself exceeded far that which he had made for the worship of God, and he said to the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth in curtains."

We know the sequel. David gathered materials, and God gave the design; Solomon built the house, and Jehovah filled it with his glory. A magnificent temple this! Adorned with fine gold, garnished with precious stones and golden chains, with figures of palm-trees and cherubims, pomegranates and wreaths of lilies—a building sublime in dimension and perfect in proportion, also complete in convenience and beauty.

This temple was destroyed by the invader, and rebuilt by Zerubbabel. They returned of the captivity thought first of their own dwellings, and were slow to rebuild the house of God. Then the word of the Lord came to them by the prophet Haggai: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."¹

The restored temple was so inferior, that those who had seen the first house wept with a loud voice. By subsequent enlargement and adornment, however, this temple exceeded that built by Solomon. Thus, then, from the morning of creation until the advent of the Saviour, with not one interval, worship has been offered in a beautiful house.

The first disciples worshipped in private dwellings—the Hebrew in his upper room, and the Roman in the atrium of his dwelling, and the Greek in the peristyle. As Christ's kingdom advanced, buildings were set apart for worship, and were enriched and adorned.

Our Nonconformist Fathers thought an ecclesiastical style

¹ Haggai i. 4, 8.

of architecture a snare, and they reverted to a domestic style—to that of the meeting-house. We are now returning to church architecture. Is this right? Is it expedient? In reply, we would offer the following suggestions :

1. If our places of worship were designed by God, and specifications sent from heaven, no such questions as these could arise. In this case, as in the building of the tabernacle and temple, our only concern could be to build everything according to the divine directions. If any particular style or any amount of cost were proscribed and forbidden by God, we could have no question as to such expenditure, or as to the adoption of such a plan. But Jesus Christ has left us at liberty to use our own judgment, only requiring that we apply faithfully the principles which he has given us.

2. That which is contrary to order, and that which is unsuitable and unsightly, must be offensive to God. We do not say that the disorderly and unadapted and ugly are as offensive as that which is sinful ; but they *are* offensive, and this, partly because of the connection of disorder and ugliness with sin. Holiness begets order, adaptation, and beauty. The rule given us is to endeavour so to walk as to please God. If we can please God by using cedar in the creation of a house for his worship, there can be no doubt as to the putting aside of curtains.

3. That which is contrary to order and beauty is out of harmony with the world in which God has placed us, for the world is full of God's riches. Here there is much of the "cedar," and but little of the "curtains."

4. Moreover, whatever justifies the use of cedar in our own dwellings, sanctions it in the house of God. Is the use of cedar for the home a matter of comfort or of pleasantness? Why should convenience and beauty be studied in our homes, and neglected in the house of prayer?

5. Does not the kind of house we build for God express our reverence for God and our love for Jesus Christ? And if in this service we go to the extent of our ability, can such an expenditure be waste? Nothing is wasted that is devoted to God; nothing that is consecrated to Jesus Christ. Is the science of the architect, and the skill of the builder, evil? Is the craft of the carver in wood and in stone, sinful? We know that they are not. And if these things be lawful, where are they to be employed? Upon what principle can we limit them to palace and senate-house, to halls of assembly and to private dwellings? The zeal of God's house will be offended by such limitations, and we shall say, "See now, I dwell in cedar, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under curtains."

6. Then, further. When we build God's house with cedar, we testify to the importance of the objects for which such structures are raised. Now such testimony is specially important to those who are without God's Church. If such see us extravagant in our own dwellings, and penurious in the house of God; careful to have all things done decently and in order in our homes, and careless in the house of God; they conclude that we think more of ourselves than of the God whom we worship, and more of our personal bodily comfort than of the ordinances of God; while they answer our speeches on the importance of divine worship by derisively saying, "See now, they dwell in cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under curtains."

7. We may add: The children of this world render all their erections attractive. The shop of the tradesman, the warehouse of the manufacturer, the tavern and gin-palace, the music-hall and concert-room, by convenience and elegance in their arrangements, seem to say to the passer-by, "Come in." And the house of God should invite the non-

worshipper, and bid him welcome when he has crossed its threshold. Else in disgust and discomfort he will say, "I can recreate myself in houses built of cedar, but if I go to the ark of God, I find it under curtains."

And, *finally*, the cedar sanctuary may aid in worship, or if it do not assist, it may prevent distraction. It is a mistake to suppose that devotion is fostered by that which is unpleasant to the eye and irksome to the whole body. In a perfect ecclesiastical structure you forget the building in its object, and yourself in God's ordinances; but bad ventilation, dangerous draughts, narrow seats and hideous forms, prevent your forgetting yourself, so that instead of saying, "God is in this place," we peevishly murmur, "See now, I dwell in cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under curtains."

We conclude, then, that the building of a cedar sanctuary is an offering acceptable to God; that is, if it be really built for God. If, while professedly built for God, it be raised in unholy rivalry with other congregations, if it be built to magnify the people who erect it, if raised to glorify a sect or to exalt a denomination, if to gratify pride, vanity, or superstition, then it is not acceptable to God. But if we build of cedar that we may worship God in spirit, hear without distraction, have fellowship in godly comfort, and attract the non-worshipper to divine ordinances, then the cedar house is an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. On the other hand, if, when we might build of cedar, we provide a tent, our offering is a stink in God's nostrils, and God rebukes us, saying, "Ye brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord."¹

¹ Malachi i. 13.

But, brethren, there is another consideration. He whom we call our Saviour has long been working for us—may I say, building for us?—constructing a tabernacle to which we may resort, and a house of refuge in which we may find shelter for ever. And does he place us under curtains? Nay, he builds for us of cedar. And he is gone to prepare a place for us. Is that a tent? Nay, it is a house of cedar. Then, while your Saviour builds for you with his blood and with his righteousness, with his cross and with his crown, can you offer to him that which costs you nothing? If we have done this, we shall at length awake to the inconsistency, and shall say, “See now, I dwell in cedar, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under curtains.”

Far, very far from you, brethren, by the grace of God, be the abuse of this structure. Into its right use may the Holy Spirit of God guide you.

In this beautiful house, “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”¹ Come as those who have been washed in the laver of regeneration, and cleansed in the fountain filled with blood; come with the light of heaven reflected in your countenance; come with the melodies of heaven in your heart, and with the songs of heaven upon your lips; come clothed with the robes which the glorified wear, the garments of salvation and the robe of Jesus’ righteousness; come with eyes lifted up to the hills; come with ears unstopped and listening for the voice of God; come with clean hands and purified hearts. “O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Let character, spirit, and behaviour accord with this structure. A terrible discord would be created by narrow minds and a spacious building, by low aims and a lofty roof, by contracted hearts and ample space, by allowed and glaring faults in worship and

¹ 1 Chronicles xvi. 29.

sculptured stones and painted windows, by unstable souls and pews of oak, by stone walls and broken fellowships, by a lofty spire and lowness of character, by a costly structure and poor services. This beautiful house must ingather a holy people, must enshrine spiritual sacrifices, must be the scene of gospel preaching and of pure communion. Never let this sanctuary be defiled by formal and hypocritical services, by false teaching, or by dissimulated love. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." The altar is ready now for the sacrifice, and let it be the best, the fat of the flock. The holy place is ready now for the incense, and let it be the most precious perfume. The holy of holies is ready now for the company of priests, and let their clothing be the holy linen without spot. The house of God is ready. May the Holy Spirit come! May the Spirit of light come! May the Spirit of love come! May the Spirit of life come! May the Spirit of power come! May the Spirit of holiness come! May the Spirit of the living God come! Come, Saviour, we beseech thee to come! To manifest thyself, come! To save the perishing, come! To reign in thy disciples, come! To be the righteous advocate of those who seek thee, come! Come Father of Spirits, we beseech thee to come! This house is built for thee of cedar; overlay the cedar with the fine gold of thy sanction; adorn the house with the precious stones of thy choicest blessings; and fill it with thy glory, by producing such a sense of thy presence, that all who enter shall be constrained to say, "This is none other than the house of God."

VII

“AWAKE, O ZION.”

“Awake, awake, O Zion.”—ISAIAH lii. 1.

O ZION! This is a case in which a place is named for the inhabitants, and a city for the citizens, and a sacred mountain for the worshippers, and the locality of an assembly for the congregation itself. The Zion before us in the text is the “chosen generation” to which Abraham was father, and the “peculiar people” whom Moses formed into a church, the people “to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.”¹ God by his prophet is here speaking to this people, and his command is, “Awake, awake.”

Leaving what is local and temporary and particular in the reference of these words, we proceed to consider them as addressed by the redeeming God to his church now, and as calling upon Christians to arouse themselves and revive, to bestir themselves, and to rise into a state of intelligent and godlike activity.

These words assume the presence of life in the people addressed. Those called to awake are not dead, but they sleep; and they sleep, so far as inactivity is concerned, as though they were dead. Look at this solemn fact—the church of the living God asleep! Here are they who have

¹ Romans ix. 4, 5.

been quickened from the death of sin into newness of life, and who have been called to walk with the living God, asleep. The people who are summoned to work in the field of the world, and to labour in the vineyard of the kingdom of heaven, asleep. Here are the living stones in the spiritual house and in God's building, here are the holy priesthood ordained to offer up spiritual sacrifices, asleep. The only people who can reasonably be expected to be awake and wide-awake, are asleep :—asleep, not in healthful, seasonable, necessary slumber, but asleep in the slumber of the sluggard, or the sleep of the drunkard, or the torpor of one smitten by atrophy or by apoplexy, or of one in a fatal swoon. The church of the living God asleep! And why asleep? There is life and power of wakefulness in the church. Moreover, God has not sent his church to sleep. There are cases in which God does send upon men the spirit of slumber; but this is not that case, for God calls, "Awake, awake." The intoxicating draught of some sinful carnal pleasure, or the opiate of some false doctrine, or the quietude of sinful inertness, or the darkness of cherished ignorance, or the monotony of formality, or the syren music of false teaching, hath sent Zion to sleep. Thus sleeping, Zion does not sympathize with the circumstances by which she is surrounded, she does not see the objects within range of her vision, she does not feel the influences which are moving and working around her, she does not meet the claims made for exertion, she does not enjoy her mercies, or take possession of her lawful inheritance. And that Zion may sympathize and see and feel and be active and rejoice and be well, God saith, "Awake, awake."

1. Certain objects of vision are important to the church of God, and that these may be kept in view, God saith, "Awake, awake." As there are objects adapted to the eyes of the

body, so there are objects answering to the eyes of the understanding, to the reason, and to the imagination, and objects answering to the perceptive sensibilities of the heart and spirit, and objects corresponding with the religious susceptibilities. Glorious objects these, as great as God, as vast as eternity, as enduring as immortality, and as attractive as the rich and living stores of Paradise before man was expelled.

Among the objects which we need to see are things *behind* us, things in the past; and things *before* us, things in the future—such things as are presented by sacred history and by inspired promise and prophecy. But the objects which I would now emphatically name, are ever-existent and ever-present spiritual objects—God our one Father, the Son of God our only Saviour, and the Comforter, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son—especially the Son of God, as the brightness of the Father's glory, and as the propitiation which God has set forth. The things we need to see are the wondrous things contained in God's word, things of God and of man, things which accompany salvation, things of angels and of devils, things of Christ, things of the world around us and above us and beneath us.

The church of God may be awake to lower and to inferior things, and may be asleep to these higher things, or if not asleep, but half awake, so that men seem like trees walking. According to the objects which are most frequently present to the eye, and the objects which being present most fill the eye and stir the whole nature, will be the inner and outer life; so that the importance of looking at certain objects cannot be over-estimated. If the church see nothing spiritual, her life will be blank; if the church see indistinctly, she will be unreal; if the church see only earthly things, she will be earthly and sensual. Only as the church is awake to the sight of the objects which should attract and absorb and command her,

will her heart and her life be right in the sight of God. Therefore God saith, "Awake, awake."

2. Certain sources of supply and fountains of pleasure and means of help are important to the church of God, and that these may be possessed and enjoyed and used, God saith, "Awake, awake." "All things are yours,"¹ wrote the Apostle Paul to the church of God which was at Corinth:—yours, the world; yours, so much of the things of this earth as is needful for you and as will promote your true welfare; and yours, an inheritance in heaven of untold value, incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. Yours are Apollos and Paul and Cephas, the services and sympathies of the ministers of Jesus Christ, with the variety of their gifts and endowments, beside the infinitely higher service of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and of our great High Priest. Yours is life, as a time of training and of education, and as a day of benevolent work; and yours is death, to translate you from earth to heaven, from things temporal to things eternal; yours are things present—pardon granted now, justification effected now, the new birth accomplished now, light shining now, life breathed now, a Saviour now redeeming, and the Father in heaven now loving and caring for his children. Yours are things to come—things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind conceived; but all things yours, to work together for good. And, as binding together things past and present and to come, exceeding great and precious promises are yours. All things are yours—the working of God's mighty power and the exceeding riches of God's grace. God is yours, and God's Christ and God's most Holy Spirit are yours.

Now when there are such things as these to be possessed and enjoyed and used, shall the church of God sleep?

¹ 1 Corinthians iii. 21.

What! sleep when the table is furnished and the host cries, "Come, for all things are ready"? Sleep when the king presents his treasure-caskets to his subjects, that they may become rich? Sleep when the Father calls to himself his once prodigal children, that he may put on them the best robe? Sleep while the Lord of all is speaking to us of treasure in heaven? While we sleep, we possess unconsciously, and enjoy but in dreams. We must be awake in order to receive and possess and use and thoroughly inherit. Therefore God saith, "Awake, awake, O Zion!"

3. There is good and godly work to be done by Zion, therefore God saith, "Awake, awake." Zion is not one of those miserable wretches who of their own will and choice have nothing to do. She is not like the horrid women of whom the Apostle Paul speaks to Timothy, "Withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not;"¹ but she is like a nursing mother, with her heart full of cares and her hands full of work. Zion is a worshipper, and she has the incense of prayer and the sacrifices of thanksgiving to provide and to offer; Zion is an intercessor, and it is expected that in ceaseless prayer she will keep no silence, nor give the hearer of prayer rest; Zion is an almoner, and it is expected that having freely received she will freely give; Zion is a servant of the most high God, and she is bound to do all that her hand finds to do with all her might. Her work is so various that Zion is as a husbandman, and as a builder, and as a vine-dresser. She is to teach and preach and comfort and warn and guide, and Zion should be the best teacher and the most tender consoler and the most faithful and reliable guide. For work and service Zion is divinely endowed,

¹ 1 Timothy v. 13.

taught of God that she may teach godliness, consoled by God that she may comfort others, guided by God that she may lift up her voice with strength, and cry to the bewildered and the lost, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Zion's rest is to be found, not in ceasing from service, but in the yoke being easy and in the burden being light.

There are two objects in the sphere of our present thought, toward which the church of God requires to be faithful and therefore wakeful. (1) Her own endowments, and (2) her opportunities. We may be sleepily and stupidly unconscious of our power, or may be blind to the season for its exertion and manifestation. Strange indeed it is that with so much to do, and that with such work to do, the church of God should ever sleep. But weakness inclines the church to sleep, certain forms of spiritual disease incline the church to sleep, weariness disposes the church to sleep, disappointment sinks the church into sleep, love of ease disposes the church to sleep, influences many and varied incline the church to sleep, and God therefore cries, "Awake, awake, O Zion!"

4. There are battles which Zion is called to fight, and victories to be won which Zion alone can win; therefore God bids Zion awake. Zion takes possession of an enemy's country, and establishes herself by driving out her foe. Zion builds, as the restorers of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah, of whom it is said, "The builders, everyone had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared."¹

To speak plainly, the life of a godly man is conflict throughout. To know the truth and to reject error, he must

¹ Nehemiah iv. 18, 21.

fight ; to walk wisely, he must fight ; to keep his heart right, he must fight ; if he would not be bruised by Satan, he must fight ; if he would overcome the world, he must fight ; if he would walk before his household in uprightness, he must fight ; if he would honour Christ in an evil world, he must fight. Foes are within him and foes are around him, and to sleep is to be grievously betrayed and shamefully overcome.

As with the individual so with the church collectively. The church of God is in militant circumstances. She is called to wage a holy war. The rank of her captain, the quality of her armour and weapons, and the character of her foes, show that this war is real. To sleep on the battle-field amid the din of war, the clashing of sabres and the roar of cannon,—can sleep ever be more unseasonable or more dangerous? The wonder is that sleep in such circumstances is possible. Perhaps the only soldiers who do sleep in the thick of a conflict are the soldiers of the cross ; and to them, with a voice that is powerful and full of majesty, with a voice that breaketh the cedars, even the cedars of Lebanon, and that divideth the flames of fire, and that shaketh the wilderness and discovereth the forests, God saith, "Awake, awake."

Awake ! to see objects the beholding of which is essential. Awake ! to resort to necessary sources of supply and fountains of joy and means of help. Awake ! to work the work of God. Awake ! to fight the good fight of faith. "Awake, awake, O Zion !"

Having interpreted the voice, let us note some of its features and characteristics.

1. The voice that would awaken us is divine. It is not the voice of some malicious devil striving to disturb the peace of God's saints. It is not the voice of man or of angel, but exclusively the voice of God: not, therefore, im-

pertinent or intrusive or unwise, but a voice of perfect wisdom and of supreme authority. It is the voice of a ruler to his subjects, of a master to his servants, of a parent to his sons, of a Redeemer to his redeemed.

2. The voice that would awaken us is powerful and full of majesty, a voice therefore that stirs, and that strengthens while it stirs him who listens to it. The wind blowing at some seasons from certain quarters enervates, but coming from other quarters, it freshens all life and braces the nerves. Some voices convey power. They seem to inspire with force to execute that which is commanded. God's means of awakening Zion is to say, "Awake, awake."

3. The voice that would awaken us has in it a tone of reproach. It seems to say, "What! Zion asleep? Zion, already and recently quickened from the death of sin? Zion, who can see God, and the things that are eternal? Zion, who can possess the exceeding riches of God's grace? Zion, who can handle as her own the things which angels desire to look into? Zion asleep in the day of her work, and in the hour of her conflict?" The cry, "Awake, awake," corrects and rebukes, while it stimulates and exhorts.

And yet—

4. This voice is a gracious voice. It is the voice of him who has called his people to be his people, and who will not cast off his people; it is the voice of him who has redeemed his church with his most precious blood; it is a voice that woos and wins while it stimulates and arouses.

5. The voice that cries, "Awake, awake," is the voice of Zion's God. He who calls Zion his own, and possesses her as a bridegroom his bride, calls, "Awake, awake."

Christian men and brethren, are we asleep? asleep toward God and the Son of God and the Spirit of the living God? asleep toward the things that are eternal? The mother may be

awake toward her home and her children, and asleep toward God. Men may be awake toward their business and their property, and asleep toward God. Women and men may be busy in their benevolent and religious enterprises, and be asleep toward the things of God. Are we asleep?—the young converts asleep already, the once aroused asleep again, and those long asleep, sleeping still? And is God calling to the sleepers? calling by the low voice of bodily weakness, by the sharp voice of bodily disease, by the mournful voice of painful bereavement, by the discordant voice of persecution and of kindred distress, by the harsh voice of bitter disappointment, and by the small still voice of inward disquiet?

God does call. And, as I arouse myself, what do I see? I see nothing temporal that is worth adopting as an object for life—nothing! not a possession, not a position, not a crown. But I see God, the true end of my being and redemption, the great necessity of my nature; and I see in God and in the heavens, treasure which waxeth not old. And what do I find within my reach? I see a personal Redeemer and salvation before me, light, life, joy, peace, and all spiritual blessings, growing like golden fruit upon living trees. Awaking, I see also work ready for me. Yes, verily, every child of sin and of sorrow I meet exhibits work to me—urgent, necessary, and serious work—work which the Saviour felt to be worthy of himself, and for which God gave his Son. Awaking, I also see the holy war between light and darkness, good and evil, Christ and Belial, God and Satan; and I feel that it claims me, armour-clad and sword in hand, and demands that in life's battle and faith's struggle I should still stand. Awaking, I see also danger, great and terrible danger. The danger to which young converts are exposed is in many cases the renunciation of the liberty which Christ has given to his disciples, and what

Paul calls the being "removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel."¹ Signs of these dangers are found in most of the Epistles. In the Epistle to the Romans, Paul defends the liberty of the saints in Rome against those who would bring them into bondage concerning days and meats and drink. In the Epistles to the Corinthians, he defends his own authority and ability as an apostle against those who would destroy even the attachment of his own converts to him. In the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul is chiefly occupied with resisting those who troubled the churches of Galatia, and would pervert the gospel of Christ, and who strove to make him, their chief spiritual friend, appear as an enemy. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, he gives solemn cautions against being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."² In the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul speaks of some who preach Christ of "envy and strife," and "of contention, supposing to add affliction to his bonds."³ In the Epistle to the Colossians, he cautions the saints at Colosse against those who would "beguile them with enticing words," and charges them, "as they have received Christ Jesus the Lord, to walk in him."⁴ In the Epistles to Timothy, Paul speaks of "all them which are in Asia being turned away from him," and names Phygellus and Hermogenes.⁵ He mentions "profane and vain babblings," and "words eating as doth a canker," and names Hymenæus and Philetus,⁶ also Alexander the coppersmith, of whom Paul remarks, "He hath greatly withstood our words."⁷ In the Epistle to Titus, he names "unruly and vain talkers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses."⁸ Peter, too,

¹ Gal. i. 6.

² Ephes. iv. 14.

³ Phil. i. 15, 16.

⁴ Col. ii. 4, 6.

⁵ 2 Tim. i. 15.

⁶ 2 Tim. ii. 17.

⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 15.

⁸ Titus i. 10, 11.

writes of "false teachers, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies;"¹ and John remarks, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you,"² and he mentions "many deceivers."³ Jude also writes of "certain men crept in unawares."⁴

The danger to Christians of being seduced into error is very great. The seducers are not infidels or pagans, but professed Christians. The worst enemies are not avowed and bold foes, but men who creep into houses. The means of seduction are foolish and unlearned questions, vain jangling, perverse disputings; and the objects of attack are not those who are unbelievers, but Christians, and of these, the least instructed and the weakest. From the day in which Jesus lived on earth, until now, there have always been such seducers. And against their accursed influence, it is needful to be awake.

There are degrees of wakefulness; and regarding the text as calling us to the most complete open-eyedness and watchfulness, let us arouse ourselves at God's bidding. We will eject the spirit of slumber, if it be now within us. We will not court, or welcome, or cherish, or yield to the spirit of slumber; but will pray a faithful God to keep us awake. And awake—we will look behind us, and beyond us, and around us, and above us. Awake—we will receive, and enjoy, and retain every blessing within our reach. Awake—we will do the work which our hand finds to do with all our might. Awake—we will fight the good fight of faith. Awake—we will carefully observe all the dangers which threaten us. Awake ourselves—we will do our utmost to keep others awake, and will say in the name of God, to all who are inclined to slumber, "Awake, awake, O Zion."

¹ 2 Peter ii. 1. ² 1 John ii. 26. ³ 2 John 7. ⁴ Jude 4.

VIII

ZION'S STRENGTH.

"Put on thy strength, O Zion."—ISAIAH lii. 1.

THE word "strength" represents those properties and qualities which are developed in endurance and in action, also a very high degree of active force and enduring power. "Put on thy strength, O Zion." And what is the strength of Zion? The strength of any community is primarily in the individuals who constitute it; so that the strength of the church of God is, not entirely, but first of all, in the separate members of that body.

The strength of Zion is the strength of human nature. It is masculine energy, feminine susceptibility, the vivacity of childhood, the buoyancy of youth, and the force of maturity. It is the power of body, soul, and spirit. It is intellectual power, emotional force, and moral strength. It is the strength of regenerated humanity, therefore spiritual and religious power; the strength of man redeemed unto God, and as redeemed, allied to God, dwelt in by God, and made strong by union with God. The strength of Zion is the strength of all that redeemed humanity is, and of all that is within human nature when regenerated and sanctified by the grace of God.

The strength of Zion is also the power of every religious principle. It is the power of faith, and hope, and love; the power of patience, and perseverance, and courage, and meekness. The strength of such as Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses and David, of the cloud of witnesses who have gained a good report through faith, who have been saved by hope, and whose faith has worked by love. If we compare Zion to a human body, we may say, She has the faculty of strong sight, she can see that which is invisible and spiritual, and she can see God; she has the power of quick hearing, she can hear voices in the world above, and she can hear the still small voice of God; she has the power of speaking to God, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and of so speaking that her words move the arm that moves the world; she has the power of various action, she can run and not be weary, walk and not tire or faint, mount as on the wings of an eagle, and work in God's husbandry as a true labourer with heart and with hands; she has the power of manifold endurance, so that she can strive for the mastery, and fight a good fight, and run a glorious race, ford rivers, and walk through the fire.

There is strength in all life, and Zion lives with the rich and full and eternal life of God within her. Knowledge is power, and the church of the living God has the highest kind of knowledge. A settled faith is power, and Zion has a fixed and positive belief. Confidence and trust are power, and the church of God relies upon God. Hope is power, and the hope of the church is as an anchor sure and steadfast. Love is power, and godly charity never faileth. Patience, perseverance, and courage are powers, before which obstacles yield and dangers flee away, and the church of God is trained to be patient and steadfast and brave.

The strength of Zion is the power of certain agencies and

influences. The church has power in her testimony to truth, in her intercession before God, and in her character as the leaven of society and the salt of the nations. Union is strength, not certainly where an ox is yoked to an ass, but where alliance is wise and entire; where heart sympathizes with heart and hand joins in hand.

Such is the strength of Zion. It has been well said, "He is but the counterfeit of a man who has not the life of a man." May we not say, He is but the counterfeit of a Christian who has not the strength of a Christian; and that is but the counterfeit of a church which has not the strength of a church? It must be manifest to all, that there is no lack of strength in the church of God. Now this strength may be dormant and concealed; and in a time during which the power of Zion is slumbering and hid, God saith, "Put on thy strength, O Zion."

If a man put *out* his strength, he puts *on* strength, he appears clothed with strength as with a garment. Virgil furnishes us with an illustration: Æneas visits Drepanum in Sicily, and there by various games celebrates the anniversary of his father's death. The combatants with the cestus are described. Dares first shows his face with strength prodigious, and rears himself amid loud murmurs from the spectators. He uplifts his lofty head, presents his broad shoulders, brandishes his arms and beats the air with his fists. And Entellus accepts his challenge, flings from his shoulders his vest, bares his huge limbs, his big bones and sinewy arms, and stands forth of mighty frame in the middle of the field. Forthwith each on his tiptoes stands erect, and undaunted raises his arms aloft in the air. Dares and Entellus, as they put out strength, put on strength.

A working-man and a trained athlete, when asleep or otherwise in repose, appear clothed with weakness. All the

muscles are relaxed, and the limbs are motionless and apparently powerless, as the parts of a marble statue. But when the athlete is engaged in some bodily exercise, or the working-man is handling his tools and lifting his materials, his appearance is that of one arrayed with power. As he puts out strength he puts on strength, nor can he put it out without putting it on. Adapting the expression of the idea to common utterance, we may read our text, "Put *out* thy strength, O Zion."

Let me here remark, that my text harmonizes with words frequently addressed to Zion and to her sons. "Be strong therefore, and shew thyself a man."¹ "Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it."² "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not."³ "Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength."⁴ "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."⁵ "Be strong, O Zerubbabel; be strong, O Joshua; be strong, all ye people of the land, and work."⁶ "Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days."⁷ "Fear not, but let your hands be strong."⁸ "Quit you like men, be strong."⁹ "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord."¹⁰ "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."¹¹

The text assumes that Zion's strength is not put out. The terms in which she is addressed prove this. "Awake, awake, O Zion." In sleep, all the members of the body put on weakness. It is as though the eye could not see, nor the ear hear, nor the tongue speak, nor the hand work, nor the foot walk, nor the body stand upright. In sleep, the whole body is in repose; and, during the hours of slumber, im-

¹ 1 Kings ii. 2. ² 1 Chron. xxviii. 10. ³ Isaiah xxxv. 4. ⁴ Isaiah xl. 9.
⁵ Isaiah xl. 31. ⁶ Haggai ii. 4. ⁷ Zech. viii. 9. ⁸ Zech. viii. 13.
⁹ 1 Cor. xvi. 13. ¹⁰ Ephes. vi. 10. ¹¹ 2 Tim. ii. 1.

potency clothes the body as a robe. Now God is not satisfied with this, and he cries, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion."

We proceed to state reasons why God should thus speak to his church.

1. God bids Zion put on her strength for self-manifestation. I say for self-manifestation, not for self-magnification. Self-magnification is disloyal, traitorous, and impious; self-manifestation is a plain duty. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."¹ The church of God can see; then why appear as though born blind? The church of God can hear; then why appear as though born deaf? The church of God can speak; then why seem to be dumb? The church of God can walk and work and endure; then why appear impotent and helpless? Strong winds make themselves heard. Strong sunshine makes itself felt. Strong life shows itself, whether in the animal or vegetable kingdom. And the church, to be heard and seen and felt and known, must be strong. The savour must be in the salt. The city must be set upon the hill. The light may not be under a bushel.

2. God bids Zion put on her strength that he may be glorified. A redeemed man is a new creation and a divine workmanship. A congregation of believing men, and the whole visible church, are of God's founding. Ye are God's husbandry; ye are God's building. Now if the husbandry appear as the field of the slothful, and as the vineyard of the man void of understanding; if it be all grown over with thorns, and nettles cover the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof be broken down; if the building appear to be defective in foundation, imperfect in construction, and

¹ Matthew v. 16.

framed together with bad material—the name of God, instead of being honoured, will be blasphemed. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”¹ On the principle involved in the words, “This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise,”² Zion is required to put on her strength.

3. God requires Zion to put on her strength for the sake of her own well-being. If the powers of the church be inactive, they will decline. The staff of faith, if never used, will decay. The helmet of hope, if never worn, and the sword of the Spirit, if never wielded, will rust. The fire of love, if neglected, will go out. The heart, left inactive through the inactivity of the body, will enlarge, or ossify, or degenerate. The muscles, if never tasked and taxed, will deteriorate and shrink. Unmanifested religious life, whether in the person or the community, soon subsides.

4. Zion is required to put on her strength in order to meet the claims of a sinful and suffering world. Zion's mission demands Zion's strength. “Ye are my witnesses,” saith God. This witnessing to God and for God; this testifying to the Godhead of Jehovah, and proclaiming his name; this publishing the gospel of his grace, and bearing witness to the truth—demands strength. This witnessing is often prophesying in sackcloth. It has to be maintained in the face of the idolater, and atheist, and deist, and blasphemer, and infidel, and heretic. It must, moreover, be extended to every creature. Nor is this all the work

¹ 1 Peter ii. 9, 10.

² Isaiah xliii. 21.

demanding of the church. Zion is required to befriend all the needy, and to comfort all that mourn. To her the hungry and naked and homeless and sick, to her the prisoner and the persecuted and the desolate, to her the widow and orphan may look for relief and for consolation. Work of this nature and service of this variety, demand her strength.

5. God directs Zion to put on her strength, because strength has been given her to put on. Whatever God makes us be, he would have us appear to be. Whatever God endows us with, he would have us use and employ. To have strength and not put it on, is like a rich man clothing himself with rags, or a man who can walk moving only with crutches. It is like the steward of a vast estate conducting his lord's affairs as though the master were a pauper, instead of being a prince in wealth.

And, *sixthly*, Is not this putting on of strength as essential to Zion's peace and joy as to her outward prosperity? The church of the living God can only have rest and be joyful as she does put on strength. Sleep is not always sweet. It is only the sleep of the labouring man that is really and uniformly sweet. There is a kind of sleep that is most uneasy, and the misery of idleness and of inactivity is proverbial.

For reasons such as these, God saith, "Put on thy strength," show thyself strong as a worker and a sufferer and a soldier, as a witness and teacher and consoler.

It is interesting to observe by how many voices God speaks to us as he speaks in our text. By the smarting of the conscience when we withhold our strength, and by the glowing of the conscience when we consecrate our strength, by the breadth of love which God's law requires, and by the depth of privilege which the gospel provides; by the correction administered when we are inactive and inert,

and by the blessedness experienced when we abound in the work of the Lord, God is continually saying, "Put on thy strength, O Zion."

And now having expounded the text, let us use it for correction and instruction, and for the solemn purpose of self-examination. As individual Christians we are separate and distinct parts of the church of God. Let us then ask ourselves, With what are we clothed, with weakness or with strength? Do we walk, not by sight but by faith? Are we strong in faith, giving glory to God? Do we endure as seeing him who is invisible? Is our hope sure and steadfast, and are we saved by our hope? Does the love that dwells within us, bear all things and endure all things? Is it the charity that never faileth? Has our patience the reputation of doing her work perfectly? Are we soon weary in well-doing, and do we faint under divine rebukes? Does the fear of man ensnare us, or are we bold as a lion? Is it our habit to be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord? Are we known to be stronger for our Christianity, more manly and energetic, more vigorous in mind and more ardent in heart, stronger in our whole nature, and stronger to meet every demand upon our strength? If we be true disciples of Jesus Christ, we have strength to put on. Are we with this strength invested?

As a congregation, we are part of the visible church of God. As such, in what are we arrayed? Are we seen to do good unto all men as we have opportunity? to shine as a light, holding out the word of life? to confess Christ boldly without yielding to fear or to shame? and to adhere firmly to our principles without compromise?

Every day and everywhere God saith, "Put on thy strength." And shall we not obey this call? I may be conscious, not of strength, but of weakness. But God asks

for the putting on of my strength—"thy strength." God does not demand the strength of the man Samson from the infant Samuel, or the strength of Abraham from the child of Hagar, or the strength of Paul from his son Timothy. There is one strength of the sun and another strength of the glow-worm, there is one strength of the cedar and another strength of the grass-blade. Art thou a bruised reed? put on thy strength. Art thou as smoking flax? put on thy strength. Is thine arm withered? put on thy strength.

I may feel very weary. There is nothing wonderful in our being weary. But there is a remedy for weariness. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."¹ So that to the most weary God may say, "Put on thy strength."

I may think it hopeless and useless to put on my strength. Still God saith, "Put it on." In this matter I have neither authority nor ability to judge. Here is a distinct command, based upon that which we are and that which we have. It is ours to obey. Let us obey promptly and heartily and constantly. Everywhere, at all times, and in all things, let us put out our strength. Then we shall be "true disciples," "good servants," "wise stewards," "obedient children," "good soldiers;" and our prospect will be the distinct "well done" spoken by our master, the conqueror's crown placed on our head by the captain of our salvation, and the joy of the reaper at harvest-home. Then, too, the church, instead of being a scorn, shall be a wonder and a praise, and men shall say, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"²

¹ Isaiah xl. 31.

² Sol. Song vi. 10.

IX

GOD'S INHERITANCE IN HIS SAINTS.

*"And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."
EPHESIANS i. 18.*

AMONG men there is possession and inheritance, in beings as in things. The husband has a portion in his wife, and parents have a portion in their children. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord."¹ And according to the text God has his inheritance in the saints. He who is the first cause of all things owns all things, and all things are his inheritance, and as part of this vast possession, living beings are God's peculiar treasure.

That God has an inheritance in the things which he has made, is a fact asserted sometimes by himself. "All the earth is mine."² "Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine."³ "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine and the fulness thereof."⁴ "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts."⁵ Thus does God claim his own inheritance. And others claim it for

¹ Psalm cxvii. 3. ² Exodus xix. 5. ³ Job xli. 11. ⁴ Psalm I. 10-12.

⁵ Haggai ii. 8.

him. Thus Moses, "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is."¹ And David, "In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land."² "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof."³

God makes this claim, and his servants make it in his name, because it is so frequently overlooked. Some hold the deistical doctrine, that God has made all things, and has left all things, retired from all things. And many, who do not hold the doctrine, cherish the sentiment which is in harmony with it. But he whose thoughts are in accordance with divine revelation, cannot but believe that God holds all things in his own hand. Any attempt on our part to ignore the established order, and to violate natural arrangements, is followed by results which declare with a mighty voice, "The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land;" "God made the world and all things therein."⁴

He who has said, "All the earth is mine," saith also, "Behold, all souls are mine."⁵ And his servants claim this inheritance in his name. "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."⁶

God has an inheritance in the individual, and he also has an inheritance in the church. Hear him say, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people."⁷ Hear Moses say, "The Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance."⁸ "Yet they are thy

¹ Deut. x. 14.

² Psalm xcvi. 4, 5.

³ Psalm xxiv. 1.

⁴ Acts xvii. 24.

⁵ Ezekiel xviii. 4.

⁶ Psalm c. 3.

⁷ Exodus xix. 5.

⁸ Deut. iv. 20.

people and thine inheritance."¹ "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance."² Now the ideas expressed in these words are not ideas suited only to the Hebrew theocracy. Hear Jesus say, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."³ And mark these words, "We are the Lord's."⁴ "And ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price."⁵ But it is to the text that we specially lead your attention, "And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." The redeemed of mankind—men, women, children—are God's estate, his riches, his wealth.

1. God's inheritance in the saints is possession of the highest kind. That which lives is superior to that which is inanimate. That which is moral and religious in its constitution is superior to that which is without moral sensibility. Beings are better than things. And the highest and best beings are they which are most like to God, possessing his image and wearing his likeness. Moreover, that which has been redeemed is more precious than that which has never been in circumstances to require salvation. God's inheritance in the worlds upon worlds which he has made is inferior to his inheritance in the saints. There is a low and dark side to our human nature, and indeed to both classes of rational beings with whose existence we have any acquaintance. Some angels have become devils, and all we men like sheep have gone astray. But the capacity to sin reveals a nature of high endowments and of lofty powers. The creatures that cannot sin are in nature farther from God than those which can and which do sin. So that in view of all that is low and little and degraded and depraved in our

¹ Deut. ix. 29. ² Deut. xxxii. 9. ³ John xvii. 9. ⁴ Romans xiv. 8.

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

nature, we may still say that God's inheritance in the saints is possession of the highest kind. Is not this clearly expressed by Malachi, "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels"?¹ The check or restraint of which I am conscious in making this statement is supplied not so much by what human nature is, as by the queer combinations to be found in some saints. The god-like is in some cases half concealed by the toad-like and the serpent-like and the bull-of-Bashan-like, and you have mixtures as incongruous as any to be found in heathen mythology, or in the pictures of symbolic prophecy. But God separates the precious from the vile, and the chaff from the wheat, and the wood, hay, and stubble from the gold and silver and precious stones—separates them when found together in the same character and life. In spite of all drawbacks, God finds his inheritance in the saints.

2. God's inheritance in the saints is his own original possession. It is underived from any ancestor. He never was heir to it; he holds it in no succession. The saints are his from the beginning, and his alone. Jesus Christ speaks of men being given by his Father, even to himself. The possession of which we speak is an eternal inheritance.

3. While the saints are God's inheritance naturally, he has a second or double title to the possession. "Till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased."² "Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed."³ "Until the redemption of the purchased possession."⁴ "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar—*or* purchased—people."⁵ "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have

¹ Malachi iii. 17. ² Exodus xv. 16. ³ Psalm lxxiv. 2. ⁴ Ephesians i. 14.
⁵ 1 Peter ii. 9.

called thee by thy name ; thou art mine."¹ "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price."² Special service rendered even to those who are naturally allied to us creates new ties. The sick child lifted up from the gates of death is a special inheritance to the mother who has fondly nursed it. The prodigal son restored to his father is a special inheritance to the parent, whose life was a blank until the lost one was found. "And joy," said Jesus, "shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."³ "I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."⁴ A forgiven transgressor, an ungodly man justified, a bad man regenerated, a man in a second sense God's child, is his peculiar treasure.

4. This inheritance, looked at from the God-side and from the heaven-side, is a rich and glorious inheritance. Considered from the human and earthly side, the possession is very poor. What can we see in ourselves that can make God rich? The consciousness we have of impurity and ignorance and folly and sinfulness, makes the eye dim to behold the good which God has wrought in us. But even that good, when we see it most clearly, does not appear to be such as can make God rich.

And considered from the human and earthly side, the possession has but little honour and renown connected with it. But God considers himself rich and exalted and renowned, in being able to say of his saints, "They are mine." There is something very human about this. It reminds us of the young mother pressing her firstborn to her bosom and saying, "Mine." It reminds us of the father watching the growth of a daughter, and saying as he

¹ Isaiah xliii. 1. ² 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. ³ Luke xv. 7. ⁴ Luke xv. 10.

marks every fresh development, "Mine." It reminds us of the husband, as he lives to appreciate more and more the good qualities of a prudent wife, saying in his heart continually, "She is mine." There is something, I say, very human in God's finding his inheritance in his saints, and in his saying of his saints, "They are mine." And yet there is much that is superhuman in considering himself rich and exalted by holding such an inheritance as this. Let me here remark that God looks upon the inheritance with his own eyes. He knows it not by the hearing of the ear, but by personal acquaintance. And he beholds it with eyes of a Godly sort. All good principles, all pure motives, all holy desires, all right dispositions, all holy tendencies, all germs and seeds of good actions, he sees and he appreciates. He reconciles all apparent contradictions, and he harmonizes all distinct qualities and actions. He abates blame by considering the overpowering force of temptation, and by remembering the fewness of helps and advantages on the side of virtue. He knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust; he knows our sorrows. If that which is good be small as a grain of mustard seed, and feeble as a bruised reed, and ready to perish as a spark, he sees and he appreciates it. God sees with his own eyes. Objects to our eyes are according to our sight. Among men there are short sight and long sight and feeble sight—and all this, speaking physically, intellectually, and morally. "I cannot see it," men often say when objects are pointed out to them; and how true it is! The sense-power is lacking, the mental power, the moral power, the heart-power, the will-power. There are men who, on account of their ill-condition and miserable dispositions, never see good in anybody but themselves. But God cannot be blind either to evil or to good.

And he sees his inheritance in the saints with his own strong and pure eyes.

God estimates his inheritance in the saints by his own standard. God is a spirit, and that which is spiritual must be most precious in his sight. Not that he despises that which is material. How can the Creator of flowers despise what is material, whether it be substance, form, or colour? Those professing Christians who would have us think that they set no value on material things, are not in this matter followers of God. But still less are they followers of God, who exalt the material above the spiritual. The creature who can see the sun, understand its position, appreciate its glory, talk about it, write about it, is superior to the sun. And the creature who can see God, love him, trust him, serve him, and be like him, must be more precious to God than the bright worlds upon worlds, which form the midnight glory. And what shall we say of the being, who is not only capable of being like God, but who *is* like God? God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. God is love, and he hates nothing which he has made. His saints are born again to be light, and they are born again to be love. God estimates at its true value all that at once is involved in the regeneration, but he sees the end from the beginning, and beholds the new birth consummated in his perfect image. Goodness is the ultimate standard by which God estimates his creatures, and he looks upon his saints on earth as predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, while he hears them say, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."¹

God holds and handles this inheritance with his own

¹ John iii. 2.

clean and holy hands. Many of the inheritances of men are impoverished, and their glory is dimmed by the manner in which they are held and enjoyed. This inheritance is undefiled and unwasted by the owner. Paul may therefore write confidently of "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

The state of God's heart toward his inheritance makes it appear to himself as rich and glorious. Indifference, lack of right feeling, and evil feeling, will make that appear poor which is rich, and will make that appear mean which is glorious. Purity and love see objects as they really are. God feels himself rich, and God feels himself glorious, in the possession of the inheritance of the saints. And this feeling on the part of God is not likely to change. Hear him say: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? She may forget, yet will I not forget thee."¹ Hear the prophet say: "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."²

We have seen that God has a rich and glorious inheritance in the saints. Upon this fact we proceed to make a few practical observations.

1. If God have a rich and glorious inheritance in the saints, he will claim it. He will not leave it alone, as though it did not belong to him, or as though it were worthless. And God does claim it. He claims it by the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking in the hearts of the saints. He claims it by the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. He claims his inheritance by his work upon it. He claims it by his providence over it. He claims it by his conduct, when this inheritance is defiled or

¹ Isaiah xlix. 15.

² Isaiah lxii. 3.

given to another. He claims it by frequently reminding his saints that they are not their own. He claims it by making us conscious that we belong to him, and to him alone. God will not permit us to think and feel and act as though we belonged to ourselves, or were the property of his creatures. Body, soul, and spirit are God's inheritance. Intellect, heart, will, and conscience are God's inheritance. All that constitutes us is God's inheritance, and he claims body, soul, and spirit as his own.

2. If God have a rich and glorious inheritance in his saints, he will take care of his possession. All the looking to and attention and regard and oversight, which it requires for its safety and prosperity, cannot but be bestowed. Nothing in the material world strikes me with more force than the regard which God has shown to all possible events, to all circumstances and contingencies. And to the case before us will apply the words of the Saviour: "If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"¹ If you be his rich and glorious inheritance, God cannot but care for you. Sometimes it seems as though he did not care. When sickness and disease attack the saint, or when death enters the saint's home and darkens it by his overshadowing presence, when poverty like an armed man attacks him, or when the wicked revile and persecute him, or when flesh and heart fail, it appears as though God did not care. But these very circumstances are signs of his care. The plough with its broad and sharp blade or furrow-slice driven into the land, is a sign of culture and of ownership. The harrow with its long prongs drawn over the field, is a proof of concern for its fertility. The sharp threshing instrument having teeth is a sign of something being thought worthy of the garner. Changing the

¹ Matthew vi. 30.

form of our illustration, in the midst of the howling of the wind and the sound of the big rain-drops, as they come dancing to the earth, and the roaring of the troubled waters, a voice clear and distinct and penetrating as that of a silver trumpet, even the voice of an active providence, and the voice of positive promise, saith, "He careth for you, he careth for you." If God's inheritance in the saints be to his own heart rich and glorious, he cannot but care for that inheritance. And this care will partake of all the qualities of his own nature. It will be independent care, almighty care, righteous care, loving care, sufficient care, perfect care.

3. If God have a rich and glorious inheritance in his saints, he will make use of that inheritance. The little in God's hand shall produce more, and the more much, and the much a greater abundance. At present God uses his saints to relieve distress, to supply need, to mitigate suffering, to wipe away tears, to diffuse knowledge, to convert sinners, and to spread the heavenly kingdom. And hereafter he will use them as his ministers in working his glorious and most gracious works. The preposterous idea which some lazy people have of heaven, is equalled only by their notion of their duty on earth. To be comfortable is the Alpha and Omega of some professing Christians, so far, that is, as their sense of responsibility is concerned. But the God who has made nothing in vain is not likely to retain a rich and glorious inheritance, merely as an object pleasant to the eye and glorious to behold. Christians are not senseless ornaments in God's house, but servants.

4. If God have a rich and glorious inheritance in his saints, he must take pleasure in it. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy."* "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride,

* Psalm cxlvii. 11.

so shall thy God rejoice over thee."¹ May I call this pleasure in the heart of God an upright and honest pleasure? It does not arise from his shutting his eyes to our ignorance and follies and sins, but with eyes, which cannot behold iniquity without hating it, resting on all that is imperfect and evil in his saints, he still takes pleasure in them. This does not, moreover, arise from any false and untrue position in which we are placed by the dispensation of mercy, or from any unnatural feeling or fictitious sentiment towards us in God's nature. God's pleasure in his saints is a pure and upright and honest pleasure. And is not this pleasure parental, motherly and fatherly, and therefore a loving, yearning, and yet restful delight? Although this delight may be disturbed by sin and by sorrow, without doubt it exists with no variableness or the shadow of turning.

5. If God have a rich and glorious inheritance in his saints, he will not forsake it. His natural and his special title to it, his having claimed it, his use of it, and care for it, and delight in it, are all so many reasons for retaining it. And he has the capacity and ability to retain it. The inheritance which husbands and wives have in each other, is an inheritance which by reason of death fades away. The inheritance which parents have in children, is one which by reason of death in some cases, of removal from home in other cases, and of other circumstances, either partially or entirely fades away. But in this case the heritor lives, and the inheritance itself is everlasting. And while he lives he changes not. God may forsake churches. God does forsake churches. He leaves churches like wrecks cast up high and dry on the sea-shore. He leaves churches like a tree in the forest scathed by lightning. He leaves churches like a house deserted, because incurably pestilential or manifestly unsafe.

¹ Isaiah lxii. 5.

But churches are not saints, and saints, although in churches, are not churches. Compare what Christ saith to the seven churches of Asia with his words addressed to his disciples individually, and you will see that, while the sheep have eternal life, the particular fold with which they are connected has a conditional and most uncertain life. He cannot forsake his saints, because he cannot forget, and cannot be capricious in his attachment, and cannot become weary of his charge and care.

6. If God have a rich and glorious inheritance in his saints, and if he claim his inheritance, care for it, make use of it, and take pleasure in it, and if he will not forsake it, the saints themselves should think and feel and speak and act and live in harmony with this position. Some saints will not openly acknowledge themselves such by coming to the Lord's table, by identifying themselves with a congregation of believing men, by confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus, or by any such distinctive Christian act. In some cases this non-confession arises from spiritual modesty, and from a holy fear of falling, and from a pure jealousy for the honour of Jesus' name. But in many cases it springs from a false and foolish shame. Other saints do acknowledge their position, but they do it, seeming to make excuses for it, as though they were half-ashamed of it. And how very seldom do we hear a Christian glorying in his position. Are we God's inheritance? Here is something to glory in; even triumph is demanded. Here is a haven of rest,—he cares for us, and we may be careful for nothing. Here too is an object of life, an end which may gather into itself all our hopes and fears, all our desires and aims, all our passions and affections. This fact should give unity to our life, and harmony to all our actions, and consistency to our whole behaviour. What manner of persons should we be in all

holy conversation and godliness, if God have a rich and glorious inheritance in the saints? One thing is certain: we ought to respond to God's claim upon us, and trust God's care of us, and submit joyfully to God's use of us, and exult in God's pleasure in us, and rely on the constancy of God's attachment to us. Oh, for the spirit of Peter when he wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;"¹ or for the spirit of Paul when he said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;"² or of John when he exclaimed, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."³ They who come suddenly into a fortune, or rise unexpectedly to a high social position, do not at first see and understand all that is required of them. And thus the appreciation of their position by the saints is a gradual experience. But how important to make progress in this matter, so that we may walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called!

7. If God have his inheritance in the saints, we ought to esteem it highly, and to cherish a living and loving care for it. Christians should care for themselves, because they are not their own, and should care for themselves for God's sake. To defile or degrade or debase themselves, or to waste their energies, is to defile and debase and waste the inheritance of God. What motives are here to the cherishing of purity

¹ 1 Peter i. 3.

² Ephes. i. 3.

³ 1 John iii. 1, 2.

and righteousness and Christ-likeness! And how careful should saints be of each other! There is additional force in the expostulation, "Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother?"¹ and there is additional force in the prohibition, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren;"² and there is additional force in the precepts, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith;"³ "Love as brethren, be pitiful and courteous,"⁴ when we remember that God's rich and glorious inheritance is in the saints. Hear God say: "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."⁵ Hear the Son of God say: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."⁶ God accounts injustice, wrong, neglect, malice, shown to his saints, as manifested to himself, and he accepts love and ministration as though he were the immediate object. That which affects our fellow Christians, affects the rich and glorious inheritance of God.

According to the text, Paul prayed that the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus at Ephesus might know what are the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints. Let us pray that we may know this too. Such knowledge is as desirable for us as for them. Such knowledge is as attainable by us as by them. That which we need for this, is the enlightenment of the eyes of our spiritual understanding. Let us ask all this for ourselves and for each other, and let us ask it in faith, nothing wavering. If we ask for health or wealth, or for any material and temporal good, we cannot ask with the assurance that it will be good for us; but we are quite sure that this is good,—to know the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

¹ Rom. xiv. 10.² James iv. 11.³ Gal. vi. 10.⁴ 1 Peter iii. 8.⁵ Zech. ii. 8.⁶ Matt. xxv. 40.

X

A PASTOR'S CLAIM.

*Preached at the Autumnal Meeting of the Congregational Union, held at
Halifax, October, 1858.*

"Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?"

"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:"

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart."

"And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:"

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."—2 COR. iii. 1-5.

THE voluntary relations of men to each other are almost entirely founded upon mutual confidence; and even those connexions which are involuntary, require reciprocal reliance, as the basis of true satisfaction and of successful co-operation. Thus, betrothment is betrustment, and marriage without confidence is a practical lie. The parent who does not duly trust his children will soon ruin them, and the child who does not rely upon his parents will certainly become prodigal. Distrust in a master will make him a tyrant, and want of confidence in a servant will produce miserable eye-service. The suspicious prince is always cruel, and the dis-

trustful subject is a revolutionist and a rebel. Nor can we, when thus speaking of the importance of confidence in the various relations of life, except the pastoral and ministerial office. The sacred functions of the Christian ministry are nullified by distrust in the churches, and by suspicion in the outlying masses of the people.

And while it is evident that confidence between man and man is essential in all the relations of life, it must be known to every one of us, that this very confidence is easily disturbed and soon destroyed. A whisper "on 'Change" against the credit of the successful merchant will sometimes gather force, until the breath of suspicion has become a whirlwind of distrust, sweeping the man's business, credit, property, and character into one deep gulf of ruin. See you that aged woman speaking into the ear of that young wife? She is insinuating charges against the affection and fidelity of her absent husband. The cruel wretch is trying to sever the golden threads which tie these two young hearts together, and in time she will do it. The creature has not courage to take an unclashed knife or a glittering sword, and effect her satanic purpose by an open stroke, but her deceitful fingers hide the sharp flint with which she will fret and hack those threads, until she has severed them. Do you hear what is passing between those lads who, though yet in their teens, are lifting up their heads as if society had injured them by not having long ago called them men? Listen. The elder is saying to the younger: "And so your governor does not allow you to go to the theatre, and to the races, and to the billiard-room? He will have you home every evening early, and does not even allow you to smoke? Would I be thus tied to my mother's knee by her apron-string?" And the younger lad, who has thus far trusted his mother as a haven of safety, and his father as a rock of defence, is already

inclined to regard them as bars of hindrance to his happiness, and as stumbling stones in the path of enjoyment. Confidence is easily disturbed and soon destroyed. A question addressed in an incredulous tone to a master about the fidelity of an honest servant, will make him watch that servant with an eagle's eye. A word about low wages or high, much work or little, restraint or liberty, will change the appearance of the best of employers in the eyes of the majority of servants. History shows how the light wind of discontent has brought down the avalanche of revolution upon the proudest thrones. In like manner may the confidence of the churches of Christ in their chosen pastors be impaired and crushed. Of the danger to which confidence in this case is exposed, these epistles to the Corinthians afford illustration.

The Apostle Paul had introduced the gospel to Corinth, and he was the father of the church of God in that city ; for which reasons his influence over the Corinthian converts had been very great. Soon after the apostle had left Corinth, false teaching endeavoured to undermine his position, and this, chiefly, by prating against him with malicious words. They said, "Your beloved Apostle Paul ! His outward appearance is base, and his bodily presence weak, and his speech contemptible. Paul ! he is no Christian philosopher ; science is as far from his teaching as the east is from the west ; he is not a deep thinker ; did he ever feed you with meat, was it not always with poor milk ? Paul ! why the least of the disciples might teach as well as he. Indeed, he is no apostle, for he was never ordained either by Christ or by those whom Christ consecrated, and it is impudent presumption to take this honour to himself. Besides, he never even saw the Saviour. Paul ! he can have no divine commission, or supernatural

endowments, or sacred charge, for he has never claimed a maintenance of the churches, which he certainly would have done, had he either the apostolic position or apostolic gifts. Paul ! you know it has been reported, and we are quite sure that he has said, 'Let us do evil that good may come.' Paul ! you think by far too much of him, and when you know more you will soon change your mind toward him."

To counteract the devilish work of these church sappers and miners, the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written ; but this letter did not arrest them in their wicked work ; on the contrary, they used Paul's epistle as a weapon against him, and in this second letter he defends the first. In the former epistle he had commended himself to his converts, and this had exposed him to the charge of pride and vain-glory, referring to which charge he writes in our text, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves ? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you ? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men : Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward : not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God."

Let us look, *first*, at the grounds of a Christian pastor's claim upon the confidence of the churches of Christ ; and, *secondly*, at the basis of a true pastor's own confidence as respects his work. The former are exhibited in our text as follows :

1. There is a peculiar writing—inscription, shall we say ?—on the tablet of the Christian's soul. The old covenant, with its precepts and penalties and promises, was engraven

upon slabs of stone ; but the new covenant, with its gospel and its commandments, is written upon the sensitive and everlasting tablet of the heart. The central truth, that God is love, is written there. The good news, that God so loved the world and spared not his own Son, is written there. The faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, is written there. The sublime doctrine, that God is by Christ reconciling the world unto himself, is written there. The gracious arrangement, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, is written there. The new commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you, is written there. The glorious assurance, I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, is written there. Divinely beautiful, eternally true, immutably good inscriptions these ; begetting hope in the despairing, and imparting joy to the sorrowful, and giving life to the dead. There is surely nothing like them in all writing from the beginning, nor can they ever be surpassed. There is other writing, true and beautiful and good. Science writes. O Saviour, direct and speed and sanctify her pen ! Science writes beautifully about the flowers which carpet the earth, and the insects and birds which find a sweet home in the air. Wisely she writes of fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl. Sublimely she writes of founts and rivers, lakes and oceans, hills and mountains, the globe and her firmament, of sun and moon and all the stars of light. Profoundly she writes of man, his body, soul, and spirit ; though here her writing is often illegible by reason of the trembling of her fingers. And Science writes usefully and for most practical purposes, as the agriculturist and manufacturer and mechanic and artist can testify. But Science, beautiful writer though she be, and wise and

sublime and useful, cannot write about the highest subjects, for human science hath not seen God, or Jesus, or immortality ; nor can she reach by her pen the fairest tablets of the human soul, for these lie hid as in an ark of incorruptible wood and of fine gold, and are deposited in an inner shrine, because the cherubim who guard them in the name of Jehovah, are keeping them for inscriptions by Jehovah's Son. "Ye are our epistle, written not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart, the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God."

2. The writing on the tablets of the true Christian's soul is effected for Christ by the Holy Spirit. Christ chooses these tablets, saves them, devotes them to this object, submits them to the Spirit of the living God, and writes upon them what and as he wills. But when Christ begins to write upon the tablets of the heart, he does not find them clean and free from inscription. Upon most of them many wretched scribblers have been writing, such as the infidel and sceptic and scorner and unbeliever and pharisee and heretic and nominal Christian and the father of lies, who have left ensnaring misrepresentations, dangerous exaggerations, cunningly-devised fables, foolish myths, mischievous half-truths, perverted texts, false traditions, and cursed falsehoods written there. Now Christ blots out all these hand-writings, which are contrary to us. He does this tenderly but effectually, gradually but perfectly, meekly but with authority ; and as he clears the tablets he occupies or covers them, writing lovingly, and therefore all that the heart at present needs ; faithfully, and therefore the present truth, and nothing which could work deception or make a lie ; and earnestly, advancing the writing as the tablet is able to receive it ; and divinely, as no other hand could write.

Brothers, think of this ! Christ writing upon the heart, that God-born, living, sensitive material ; the heart, with its many tablets, each capable of feeling the inscription, even every word and letter, every jot and tittle, and each capable of being blessed beyond measure by the inscription. Think of Christ writing—the Word,—and of Christ writing by the Spirit of the living God.

Into the mode and method of these inscriptions we cannot enter. We merely call attention to the fact that Christ, the Word made flesh, writes by the Holy Ghost upon the tablets of the heart, truths to be received, facts to be investigated, names of objects to be loved and feared and hoped for, commandments and ordinances to be obeyed, and everything connected with the new covenant which it is necessary for us to know and believe, to hope for and to do. Precious autographs of Christ, these tablets ! destined to be known and read of all men, looked into devoutly by the angels, rejoiced over by the Father of all, and written not for readings in time only, but for readings in eternity.

3. In writing upon the tablets of hearts, the Spirit of the living God employs men—pastors and teachers. If Christ be the author of the epistle, the Spirit of God is the writer, and the minister is the stile or pen. The fleshy tablet of the heart is written upon by means of another fleshy heart. The instrument of the inscription is like the agent, conscious, willing, adapted, and self-devoted. These instruments are, moreover, elect of God, and formed by God for this particular work. Compared with the author and the agent, they are nothing ; but looked at as instruments of divine writing, they are of no little importance. The epistles might be written without these instruments, but in the case before us they are, as a matter of fact, written by means of them, and interest and importance attach to them on this

account. We leave this fact for the present, to notice another, viz.:

4. That those upon whose hearts Christ has written are the epistles of Christ; they are Christ's chief means of communicating with the outlying world. Those who are not Christ's disciples have no intercourse with him; but many such do hold communications with the Lord's disciples, and they are Christ's epistles to them. Now these epistles of Christ become the epistles of Christ's ministers, not merely as having been written by them, but as being appealed to and employed as letters commendatory of themselves. The secretary or amanuensis of a wise and good sovereign may appeal to his position in support of his personal claims to confidence and regard, and thus those who write the epistles of Christ can need no letters of commendation, but may rely upon the personal testimony involved in the epistles themselves.

Giving up, however, the illustration adopted by the apostle, and speaking in plain language, we say that the works of the true pastor bear witness of him, and establish his claim to loving and hearty confidence. Does he not lead his flock to the throne of the heavenly grace, and help them pray and praise and confess their sins before the face of Almighty God our Heavenly Father? Does he not guide those, who would otherwise be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of its companions, to the pastures upon which the good shepherd feeds his sheep and makes them rest at noon? Does he not by preaching the gospel to the ignorant, seek and save that which is lost? Does he not by teaching, warning, consoling, and rebuking, become the instrument of keeping the souls which have been given to him, of strengthening them for the battle of life, and of meetening them for the inheritance of the saints in light?

Then, if he convert sinners from the error of their ways, and impart to the converted spiritual gifts, to the end they may be established, he does not need either to commend himself, or to receive letters of commendation from others. His work bears witness to his divine endowments, and his apostleship is sealed by his converts. And if any, capriciously or through prejudice, withhold the confidence which is his due, they are their own enemies, and are liable to divine chastening; but if any in malice defame the good work of a good minister of Christ, they are, to say the least, in danger of committing sin, not unlike the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

We ask, then, firm and loving confidence for the proved ministers of Christ. To require this from their own converts is to ask a small thing. To no creature on earth or in heaven is a man so largely indebted as to the instrument of his conversion. My brother, were you saved by some preacher? Is the pastor dead who saved your soul from death? Embalm him with imperishable recollections, strew upon his grave everlasting flowers, build his sepulchre with durable stones clamped by eternal brass, and hold his name and his work in everlasting remembrance. Does he yet live? Debase him not by flattery, injure him not by absurd descriptions of his powers or his work, pain him not by foolish praise, but honour him with high esteem. To esteem him highly is to render but literal obedience to the command of God. Apart from the work of which he has been the instrument, it would have been good for you never to have been born. The poison of sinfulness would be working within you unto death; evil habits would bind you as chains of iron; punishment would hang over your head as a thunder-cloud; all things would be working together for your injury, and every step would be leading you to hell.

Instead of all this danger and degradation, you are saved by grace through faith, and faith has come by hearing, and you have been brought to the new birth, and to the forgiveness of sins, and to free justification, and into everlasting life, by the ministrations of Christ's servant. Then tell me, what creature of God has served you as he who has begotten you by the gospel?

But say that you have no such personal obligations to the true ministers of Christ, they may claim confidence for their work's sake, even from those whom they have not begotten by the gospel. For their work's sake, did I say? Yes, poor and paltry and temporary are some of man's most perfect works, compared with the works of the Christian pastor. The canvas of that living picture shall be rent; the marble of that breathing sculptured group shall be broken; the stones of that magnificent pile, which the science of the architect and the skill of the builder have raised, shall be separated; the highway to which men point as a master-work shall be filled with reeds and rushes; the bridge which spans the river shall fall and be lost in its waters; the poem and the ode shall glide like shadows out of memory's shrine for ever; the musical composition shall become dumb notation; many histories and biographies shall be torn to pieces for their falsehood, and many works of science shall be discarded for false philosophy; numerous institutions of a social, political, and ecclesiastical character shall be taken from mankind as soiled and outgrown and worn-out vestures;—but the work of Christ's ministers shall abide for ever, the souls they have converted to God shall be turned towards him for ever, the hearts they have reconciled to God shall be at one with him for ever, the men they have sanctified shall be holy for ever, the souls they have saved will be safe for ever, and the men and

women and children whom they have guided to heaven will go no more out for ever. Rich men and noble, you cannot retain your wealth or your titles, but that which your pastor has given you will be treasure for ever. Poor men and dishonoured, you are not under obligation to us for silver and gold, but that which we have had to give will enrich you for ever, and in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming, it will be clearly seen that he who is the instrument of another's salvation, lays that soul under immense obligations for ever.

We ask for confidence. But let it be observed that such trust is not a hardy plant, but a plant of exquisite sensitiveness, nipped by the mildest frost, and blighted by an ungenial wind. It is not a cedar able to bear without injury the tempests which play about Lebanon, but a fruit-tree requiring shelter from the blast. Nor is the ground of the human heart, with all its envies and suspicions and maliciousness, favourable to its growth. Then it has many enemies. The faults and infirmities of the pastors themselves check confidence. The goats among the sheep in the fold of Christ delight in mischievously destroying confidence, and to prevent or impair such confidence is one object of our great adversary the devil. Indeed, the foes to the due reliance of churches on their pastors are not few. Those who hate all religion, scorn it as the claim of priestcraft. Those who abhor our Protestantism, are jealous of it as the secret of our ministerial success. And the rigid conformist would undermine it as one of the foundations of dissent. The green-eyed monster jealousy rejoices to devour it as prey, and foxes without number are drawn towards it as spoil. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes;"¹

¹ Sol. Song ii. 15.

take us the foxes, that old fox falsehood, that sly fox insinuation, that cruel fox slander, that sharp-toothed fox careless criticism, that mischievous fox gossip, that cowardly fox the anonymous complainer; take us these foxes, for they spoil our vines.

Christian men and women, give us your confidence for your own sake, for without it we cannot serve you nor minister to your profit. Give us your confidence for your children's sake, for if they detect distrust, in vain do we try to help you bring them up. Give us your confidence for our work's sake among the ungodly. I do not say we cannot work without it; but I do say that we can work more joyfully and hopefully with it. If unworthy of your confidence, withdraw from us, break our pastoral staff, take from us the prophet's robe, drive us from our pulpits, disown us, never even by a kind look bid us God-speed—I could almost say, curse us. But if we may be trusted, trust us fully, and by careful observation of the work of Christ's ministers, by a fair appreciation of the importance of their labours, by recognition of your personal and relative obligations to your pastors and of their relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, and by frequent intercourse with heaven on their behalf, so cherish the confidence we claim, that it may be like a tree planted by rivers of water which bringeth forth fruit in its season, and whose leaves do not wither. If the confidence of children in good parents, and of husbands and wives in each other, may be unjustly and cruelly shaken, we cannot expect that the confidence of churches in their pastors should never be endangered; but the danger shall only lead to increased watchfulness, while your hearts are loyal and true. Our own converts shall account its preservation as a sacred trust, our young men as a guard of good soldiers shall defend it as their pastor's

right, parents will cherish it for the sake of their children, and all for the sake of their pastor's usefulness. He who undermines it shall be accounted a traitor; the double-tongued shall have no place among you, except a place of repentance; the backbiting tongue shall be silenced by universal rebuke; and if any ask concerning us letters of commendation, we will point to yourselves and say, "They are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in fleshly tablets of the heart."

"And such trust have we through Christ to Godward, not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Let us consider, *secondly*, the ground of a pastor's own confidence with respect to his work.

The confidence of any worker with respect to his work is essential to his success. The basis of such confidence may be either his own independent resources, or the help which he obtains from those stronger than himself. The latter is the foundation of the confidence of Christ's ministers. They preach not themselves, nor do they trust themselves. All who are counted faithful would acknowledge, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves." The gospel we preach is a divine revelation, not a rational or spiritual discovery; nor can we find another gospel, or any substitute for the gospel of the grace of God. The "present truth" is not the last novelty brought out from human intuition or human reason, but "the faith once delivered to the saints." The principles of godly life are older than the everlasting hills. Our new commandment was given by our master eighteen centuries ago. Even the spirit of mind which the Saviour would

have us cherish, is so sharply defined that nothing can be added to his words with respect to it; nor is there anything which we can discover or devise, which can materially affect our position or increase our resources;—our sufficiency is of God.

To say, God is sufficient, is to utter a mere truism. It is like saying, God is God. No man need be told that the atmosphere is sufficient to inflate the lungs of a new-born infant, or that the corn raised in the different grain-growing lands of our planet is sufficient to feed some hungry family, or that the wool and cotton grown in various parts of the world are sufficient to clothe a single household, or that the earth's broad surface and hard crust are sufficient as a foundation for a human dwelling. Nor need any man be told that God is sufficient. God must be sufficient for every being and for every thing. To say, God is sufficient, is to utter a truism, but to declare our sufficiency is of God, is to exhibit a spiritual fact which among the children of men is exceedingly rare. This is not to stand gazing at the eternal light, but to walk in it. This is not to remain with folded arms adoring the Only Wise, but to ask for the impartation of his wisdom, and to receive it. This is not to sit talking of the Almighty God, but to stand holding God's hand, and to walk leaning upon God's arm, and to work, God working with us. This is to use God for the purposes of our ministry as really as we use God's creatures; and as the service of the ministry is peculiar, it is to take such advantage of the divine resources as this special work demands. Without this, a man may learn the ancient tongues in which our sacred books were written, and may acquire every cognate language; he may be a profound Bible scholar, and so far as the letter is concerned, a master in biblical criticism; by study and research he may have

made himself an able defender of the book of God against the attacks of the sceptic, the unbeliever, or the scorner; in the science of theology, as men have constructed it upon God's words, he may be a father, and his brethren may call him Rabbi; his prayers might be taken down and stereotyped as a liturgy; he may preach with the tongue of the perfect orator and govern a church with the skill of a wise king; his character may be chaste and beautiful as a Grecian statue; his actions may blend in pleasant consistency like well chosen colours in a piece of embroidery; the impressions which he makes of himself shall be always agreeable, and more than agreeable; he may do good, and occasionally some of the higher effects of preaching will follow his endeavours,—but all that he has wrought and all that he has become is by natural force, and the things wherein he fails are of more moment than those in which he succeeds. He, whose sufficiency is not of God, cannot spiritually discern the truth as it is in Jesus, and he is in hourly danger of giving up even the form of sound words which he has received from good men, and which he expounds and defends with great scholarship and ability, in danger of substituting for them his own intuitions, or reasonings, or researches into other men's inward light. Some will come to him for teaching, but there are hungry, thirsty, dying souls who press around him crying, "Man, we do not want to hear, nor have we time to hear, about what is possible or probable in the divine government, of what you think God may or may not do; tell us, What has God done for us, and what does he say he will yet do?" These, God's chosen poor, are sent empty away. The man we describe may govern cleverly and well; but he does not govern by religious power, nor does he adhere to God's directions, but is ready to compromise his principles, and

to exalt policy and expediency, as his personal feeling may dictate. He may exhibit splendid pictures of Christianity, but however perfect the drawing may be, the colouring shall be so cold that the peasant who triumphs in the subjective power and glory of the gospel, would in this respect far surpass him. He may attract eyes and ears, but he will not awaken religious sympathies; he may draw minds, but no aching, bleeding hearts shall turn towards him; he may impart certain instruction and comfort, but he will neither convert sinners from the error of their ways, nor build up the disciples in their most holy faith; he may make epistles, but they will not be the epistles of Christ; upon the tablets of the souls of his hearers will be written his own name, his opinions and his notions, his objections and his criticisms, but you shall search in vain for the name which is above every name, and shall not find one perfect sentence full of the truth as it is in Jesus. And is such work worth all our chapel building and our church organization, and the trouble some take to come to the house of prayer, and the time they spend there? Worth it! No, certainly not. But can nothing better be done? Yes, verily, something far better; the highest work which the eternal God has ever wrought by a creature, for this work is the work of the true pastor, and this can be done as God would have it be done, if our sufficiency be of God. Is it needful, for some accurate and comprehensive view of the law of God, that we ascend Sinai? Although the thunders and lightnings and thick cloud wring from us the confession, "I exceedingly fear and quake," we can make the ascent, if our sufficiency be of God. Is it desirable that we go up to the top of Pisgah in order to see the promised land, and that seeing we may describe to others the better country? We can climb where Moses stood, if our sufficiency be of God. Is it needful

that we be led into the wilderness of peculiar and solitary temptation, that we in our measure may know how to succour them that are tempted? We may go safely, and return victorious, if our sufficiency be of God. Does our work expose us to the cold contempt of the Sadducee? the hot pride of the Pharisee? the bitter criticisms of the Scribes? the traps set for us by the Herodians? the fault-finding of the hypocrites? Is it necessary that our garden of retirement be a scene of soul-agony? Are we exposed to the contradiction, contempt, and rejection of sinners? to the condemnation of such as Pilate? to a crucifixion more painful and prolonged than that of the body? to the ignominy of the malefactor and to the death and grave of the martyr? We can bear it all without reviling, or threatening, or murmuring, if our sufficiency is of God. God! Noah built an ark in which types of all earth's living and breathing creatures were safe during a deluge by God. God! the expatriated, childless, old, and portionless Abram became rich and the father of many nations by God. God! a man, once a deserted infant, delivered an enslaved people from a mighty nation and a powerful king by God. God! a people whose lives had been bitter with hard bondage in mortar and in brick and in all manner of hard service in the field, were suddenly able to devise cunning works, to work in gold and silver and brass, and in cutting of stones and setting them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship, and that for a sanctuary in the wilderness, by God. God! the young man Joshua led Israel into Canaan, and settled them in that goodly land; and the shepherd-lad David became Israel's king, and Jesse's grandson became the wisest of men, and Jeremiah became a prophet at fourteen, and Josiah a reformer at eight years of age, by God. God! what cannot I be that I ought to be,

and what cannot I do that I ought to do, by God? Aid and supply must be sufficiency, if my sufficiency is of God.

Why then are we not filled with the fulness of God? It may be that we prefer the cistern to the fountain, and that we cleave to it after it has become leaky, and it may be because of our many false gods. One thing is certain: we are always half-mad about something which, however good, is not God. The separation of church and state, the abolition of church-rates, a marriage act, organizations and associations for union, education, government grants, no government aid, better psalmody, chapels of whose architecture we need not be ashamed, a denominational press, wealth, are the false gods after which we too often have gone a whoring. Why are we not filled with the fulness of God? It may be that we do not sufficiently recognise the mediation of Jesus Christ and the ministry of the Holy Ghost. It may be that the mouth of the earthen vessel is turned down upon the earth instead of being open toward heaven, and that our receptivity has been toward the creature instead of the Creator. Why? It may be that God could not help us, because our sins have separated us from him. God is a God of truth, and he will not aid me, if I speak falsely to aid myself. He is love, and he will not aid me, if I work unlovingly to aid myself. Why do we not find God sufficient? God and ourselves can only answer this question, Why? One thing is certain, we could do our work with God, if everything external and circumstantial, which now we have, were taken clean away. The first preachers and teachers had none of our appliances, and yet succeeded, because their sufficiency was of God. Perhaps we fail, because we are not willing to try to do without anything which we suppose can aid us, and which is not within reach. Alas! that we should ever attempt to do without God,

especially in the presence of so much which rebukes this separation. Failures of every kind are saying to us, "Not that ye are sufficient of yourselves to think anything as of yourselves," while ten thousand celestial voices assure us, "Your sufficiency is of God," and God himself repeats his word to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou upright;"¹ and, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."²

And now, dear Christian brethren, let me entreat you to commend your pastors to God in ceaseless prayer, and commit them daily to the help of God. You may trust God with his own ministers, for he is able to make them both competent and successful; but as he alone is able, your reliance may not be placed elsewhere. And let me add, that you may trust Christ's ministers, if you know that they trust in God. Should you find that their refuge is science and literature, or the state, and that their strength and present help is money, fame, or the press,—distrust them; but if you see that their sufficiency is of God, then without reserve you may confide in them. There are men amongst us who can say, "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we faint not;"³ men who do say, "Our sufficiency is of God." Renew unto all such your hearty confidence.

Blessed be God, our sufficiency is also yours. The power to worship God in spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to renounce all confidence in the flesh, the ability to maintain communion with each other as saints, to hold out the word of life as lights in the world, to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, is all of God; and we will together lift up our eyes to the hills whence cometh our help. Renew and maintain and cherish your

¹ Gen. xvii. 1.² Gen. xv. 1.³ 2 Cor. iv. 1.

confidence in your pastors, and that we may be worthy of **such** reliance, we will renew our trust in our God. We do **cast** ourselves afresh upon him, and we take your love and **reliance**, and as with fresh cords bind ourselves to the altar **of your service**.

“ High heaven, that hears this solemn vow,
This vow renew'd shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour we bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”

XI

CHRIST'S COMMISSION TO HIS APOSTLES.

(A Missionary Sermon.)

NO new theme do we bring, no fresh view of missions, no new motives, no hitherto half-concealed promises, no overlooked predictions, but words which ye Christians have heard from the beginning.

Do we require that which is novel and startling to revive our missionary zeal, and to renew our strength in evangelistic enterprises? We think not. What we need, is to look at those views of mission-work which are at least many centuries old, to admit in fuller force the motives which inspired the first preachers of the gospel, to believe more cordially the promises which meet the eye of every Bible reader and the predictions which a child can interpret. The very sun which called forth the rich life and divine beauty of Paradise, is now renewing that portion of our globe which we inhabit; nor do we, as the season of summer comes round, look for another. In like manner, when our compassion for wandering men and our love for our Saviour become feeble, it is our wisdom to read again the words of the prophets and apostles, and especially the words of the Lord Jesus, and we shall soon find these words as bread of life to our fainting

zeal. To the record of the primitive commission, the words which sent forth the first preachers, words which have sustained the preaching of the gospel in every age, and which revived missions in modern times, we now venture to direct your thoughts; and may he who spake the words assist the preacher to unfold them, and help every Christian to translate them into action.

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."—MARK xvi. 15.

These words present four objects: Work, workmen, a field for work, and the divine master of the workmen.

First, Work: The work is preaching the gospel.

The power of speech is a wondrous faculty of man, lifting him up above all speechless creatures, and placing him near to that God by whose word the heavens were made, and who created all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Speech is reason's younger brother, and "a most kingly prerogative of man." It is a conduit through which a man's thoughts and purposes and feelings flow out to his fellows. It is a window through which you may see into another's spirit. It is a key by which you may unlock the door of another's heart. It is a hammer by which you may break the purposes and the resolutions of others, and a fire by which you may ignite the passions of one man or of many, and by which you may consume the wood, hay, and stubble of false notions and of erroneous opinions. A truly wondrous faculty this of speech! Some of the smallest organs of the body, and these chiefly concealed, are moved by our own will: the air vibrates beneath their influence; this air in motion flows into the ears of others, nerves and brain respond, ideas are given to the mind, feelings are awakened in the heart, and that which was the property of the speaker, and which was treasured in the sanctuary of his inner nature, becomes the

heritage of the hearers. Many men who look with wonder upon the electric telegraph have never felt astonishment as they have listened to speaking, and as they have themselves used with much effect this wondrous faculty; and yet for high origin, antiquity, accuracy, facility of use, and universal possession, the latter as far exceeds the former as a man surpasses an automaton. Children and idiots are more amazed at their own doings than at the works of the wisest and mightiest around them, and we childish and foolish men often think more of our own poor and paltry performances than of some of the mightiest works of God.

The work is speaking. Speaking is work. We sometimes contrast talk and work, as though the use of the hands and feet must be labour, but as though no exertion were involved in the exercise of lips and tongue and larynx and lungs and brain and heart, with all that is within the spirit. Speaking, as the occupation of life, in private and in public, is work, and hard work, especially when it involves reading, thinking, care, and deep emotion. The work of the priest under the law was ministering at the altar, the work of the king is ruling, the work of the parent is providing and educating, the work presented by the text is speaking, as the occupation of life. Much of the real and useful work of life is wrought by words. They are the tools of almost every worker in some department of his toil. But in the case before us they are the chief agency. The work presented in the text is speaking; not anything, however, but one thing, yet including many things; not that which primarily comes out of the man, but that which comes down from God. The work of which we speak is preaching the gospel. The gospel! And what is the gospel? The good news from heaven to earth, from the Creator to the creature, is, according to God himself, the following: "It shall bruise thy

head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."¹ According to Jacob, "Shiloh shall come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."² According to Moses, "The Lord thy God shall raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee."³ According to David, "Men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed."⁴ According to Isaiah, "A king shall reign in righteousness."⁵ According to Malachi, "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings."⁶ According to Jesus, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned."⁷ According to John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."⁸ According to Peter, "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."⁹ According to Paul the gospel is this: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."¹⁰ "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."¹¹ According to John, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."¹²

¹ Gen. iii. 15.

² Gen. xlix. 10.

³ Deut. xviii. 15.

⁴ Psalm lxxii. 17.

⁵ Isaiah xxxii. 1.

⁶ Mal. iv. 2.

⁷ John iii. 16-18.

⁸ John i. 29.

⁹ Acts iii. 26.

¹⁰ 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

¹¹ 1 Tim. i. 15.

¹² 1 John iv. 9, 10.

The gospel, in general terms, is the most blessed tidings, that God has interposed to save sinners. The gospel, in detail, would mean all that the prophets testified about salvation and the Saviour, all that divine religious institutions exhibited in symbol of salvation and of the Saviour, all that the Saviour was, all that he did and suffered, all that he has become since he ascended from this earth, all that he said of himself, and all that was said of his person and work and sufferings and death by inspired men. This is the gospel.

We do not say that the word "gospel" conveyed all these facts and truths to the old prophets, or to the eleven when they received this commission. The facts and truths which the word covered were gradually unfolded, but still gospel always meant the same thing, and there cannot be the shadow of a doubt as to what it meant on the lips of Christ, or as to what the eleven would understand by it. The words "sun" and "moon" and "stars" and "earth" and "air" are used in common by the unlearned and learned, but although all these words, as used by a man of science, cover a multitude of facts and ideas of which the peasant is ignorant, still, when they talk of the sun, they both point to the same object. Thus with Jesus and the eleven in their common use of this word gospel. Gospel, in the lips of Jesus, represented facts in the eternal past and in the eternal future—promises, predictions, his own history, dispensations of the grace of God, and certain aspects of the government of God; and gospel, to the ears of the eleven, represented the same central truths, with the outlying truths unrevealed, so that they could not mistake what Jesus meant when he said, "Preach the gospel."

And this is the work presented by the text. New work this. Worship was not new, it was old as the angels. Sacrifice was not new, it was as old as Abel. Prophecy

was not new, it was old as Enoch. Preaching was not new, it was old as Noah. The administration of a system of ceremonies was not new, it was old as Aaron. Leadership and generalship were not new, neither kingship, they were as old as Moses and Joshua and Saul. Religious teaching was not new, it was perhaps as old as Adam. But this preaching of the gospel *was* new, as the occupation of men, as the work of a life; and what is far more important, it is in every respect divine—divine in its origin and instrumentalities and materials and objects and results. A work this commenced by God; a work this which would confer honour upon the highest angel; a work this which claims high esteem for all engaged in it; a work this in which the loftiest ambition may be satiated; a work this whose results surpass in blessedness the creation of the earth and of her heavens.

We see then that the work given to the eleven was speaking, speaking as the occupation of life, and preaching the gospel.

Now look, *secondly*, at the workmen. Eleven are specially addressed. Judas is not here; where is he? But who are these? They are all the children of Abraham concerning the flesh, and have all been brought up under the various religious institutions of the Holy Land. This was to some extent education for their work, especially for their work among their own people. They had been taken from the least refined of the provinces of the Holy Land, and from the people whom the southerners despised for their illiterateness and coarseness; from the district, however, in which Jesus Christ had himself been brought up. This gave them sympathy with the common people, if not influence over them. They were men of ordinary secular occupations; several were fishermen, one was a tax-gatherer. There was

not a priest among them, not a scribe, not a ruler. The acceptableness of their work, and their success, would be entirely independent of riches or of high rank or of elevated position in any respect. They were very different men, so far as natural character was concerned. Peter, impulsive, irritable, forward, and self-confident; John, gentle, loving, and trustful; James, matter-of-fact and practical; Thomas, cautious, suspicious, and doubtful; Matthew, well acquainted with the world, prompt and active. No two were alike. Yet these very different men were called to do the same work. The variety of character which obtained among the apostles would meet, however, the varied temperaments of the people to whom they preached the gospel. The same gospel may be preached in very different styles with equal success. These men had been disciples of Christ some three or four years; they were not novices therefore in discipleship to our Saviour; but since they first heard Jesus say with power, "Follow me," they had had much experience of following his steps. They had not only been disciples some three or four years, but had been favoured with extraordinary religious privileges, as a preparation for their work. The disciples generally had come to see Jesus and to hear him occasionally, but these eleven had for several years been with our Saviour. As, therefore, more was expected from them than from others, more had been done for them. They were, however, far from being perfect men. Just before this commission was addressed to them, they were upbraided by Christ with their unbelief and hardness of heart. A perfect man or a perfect preacher is not necessary for the preaching of a perfect gospel.

Although not perfect men, they were men to whom special promises were made, promises of the presence of Christ himself and of the Holy Ghost. And this promise of the Holy

Ghost was a promise of power. "Ye shall receive power," said Christ, "after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."¹ And lastly, these workmen were representative men, foundation men, men who had to begin what others should carry on. They would not live for ever, but in every age this work would need to be done; and if we may learn anything of the present and future workmen from the first labourers, we may say, they should not be novices in religion or very young disciples; they should be disciples in special intercourse with Christ, and specially quickened by the Holy Ghost; they must be distinctly called by Jesus Christ himself. And we may learn that generally it is of advantage to the preachers of the gospel, to have been trained in the school of the ordinary walks and of the common business of life.

We have spoken of the work and of the workmen; now let us look, *thirdly*, at the sphere of their toil.

The dispensations of divine mercy had for centuries been chiefly, if not entirely, confined to one people and to one land. God's priests ministered exclusively to this people in this land. God's prophets spoke almost entirely to this people in this land. Some from the outlying world had occasionally come to this land and to this people, and proselytes, though not sought and warmly welcomed, were not rejected; but now, preachers of a glorious gospel are to leave this people and this land and are to go into all the world. They are to begin their work in Jerusalem, and are to heap coals of fire upon the heads of the enemies of their master, but Jerusalem is not to detain them. They are to labour in Judæa and Samaria and Galilee, but they may not

¹ Acts i. 8.

tarry for life there, they are to go to the uttermost parts of the earth.

God's mercy-seat is no longer a piece of sacred furniture enshrined in the Holy of Holies, shrouded by the temple veil, and approached only by the high priest, and by him but once a year. The Son of God is now the mercy-seat for the world, and by sending preachers through the world, God would expose the mercy-seat to the gaze of every creature. The glory of the Lord is no longer a material symbol of deity, but Christ the true light; and by sending his preachers into the world, God would manifest himself, so that all flesh may see his glory together. The law is no longer to be preserved upon tablets of stone, it is to be written by the Spirit of God upon the Jewish and upon the Gentile heart, and by sending his preachers into the world God teaches the nations his law. Material incense will henceforth be an abomination to God, and the only welcome frankincense will be the worship of the heart, and God sends his preachers into the world that "from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, his name may be great among the Gentiles; and that in every place incense may be offered unto his name, and a pure offering."¹ The blood of bulls and goats had ceased to be acceptably offered, and God sends his preachers that the world may know that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin. The sons of Aaron were to put off their vestments and to lay down their censers, and God's preachers are sent that the world may be invited to a kingdom in which all true subjects are priests. The temple will be razed to the ground and no longer be the place where men ought to worship, and God sends his preachers to record his name everywhere, that he may come and bless wheresoever two or three are gathered

¹ Malachi i. 11.

together, and that by his common benediction he may make earth "all hallow'd ground." Palestine ceases to be the holy land, the end of Abraham's election is realized, and the object of his children's residence in the promised country is accomplished, and other nations looking towards Canaan are to say, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings."²

The world is the sphere of these workmen's work. The world, without the limitations of country or of climate; the world, without the distinctions of barbarism and civilization, bondage and freedom; the world, irrespective of the boundaries of the world's kingdoms; the world, without regard to the preparedness or otherwise of particular peoples, whether Nero frown or Constantine smile; the world, with its varied climates and lands and nations and tongues; the world, as they saw it—Egypt and the Isles of the Sea and Greece and Rome; the world, as Jesus saw it, with America in his eye, although yet undiscovered; as he saw it from north to south and from east to west.

The men in the world is the sphere of these workmen—every creature. Wherever there were men these workmen were to go. Men—these alone can be benefited by the high faculty of speech. Men—these are the only beings needing a gospel. Men—only men are fallen and depraved and sinful. Men in all stages of life, in all conditions of life, and with all shades of character. It was man that God made in his image, man that had dominion given him over all the works of God's hands, man that fell, and man that was expelled Paradise. It is man that is a sinner, man that is lost; and to save man God gave his Son, and his Son came into our world. How much of wickedness and how much of wretchedness, what vast power for good or for evil, what

² *Isaiah lii. 7.*

a solemn destiny, how much of holiness and of happiness this word of three letters covers—I mean the word “man”! Yet how little men think of men! Some seem to say, “Preserve your game but starve your labourers; make money though you unman many men by making money; save your machinery, spare your horses, husband your capital, but neither spare nor save man.” God so loved men that he gave his Son to die for men, and the sphere appointed these heaven-called workers was man—all men—every creature.

“Every creature,” said Jesus Christ, for every human creature hath sinned, and every creature is guilty before God, and every creature is going astray, and every creature is liable to punishment. “Every creature,” said Jesus, for the gospel is good news for every creature; the gospel is, God so loved the world, and Christ is a propitiation for the sins of the world. “Every creature,” said Jesus, for the Holy Ghost was to be sent to reprove the world of sin, and every creature was to be made to feel his need of the gospel. “Every creature,” said Jesus, for every creature needs the gospel. One man may dwell as a priest in God’s house and minister at his altar, another may lead in the highest schools of philosophy; but whether men be learned in science and skilled in the arts and taught by the first teachers, and stand on the pinnacle of rank and be rich beyond computation and wear the imperial purple, or ask alms as a beggar and be clothed with filthy rags, and be despised of men and be unlearned and ignorant and barbarous, they need first of all the gospel, and therefore the gospel was to be preached to every creature. “Every creature,” for every creature living on the gospel would not exhaust the provisions of the gospel. The sun’s light was first seen by two pairs of human eyes, but now that a thousand millions of eyes behold the sun, there is no diminution in his rays. The atmosphere of the

globe was first breathed by two of human kind, but it still clothes the earth, although so many millions inhale its constituent gases.

What a glorious sphere is this for working—the world, man, men, all men, every creature! And what work! These workmen are builders of a temple that shall fill the world, and stewards of wealth which shall enrich the world, and ambassadors upon an errand of supreme importance to the world, and sowers in the field of the world, by whose agency the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, men shall be reconciled to God, the poor shall become heirs of God, and “the tabernacle of God shall again be with men, and he shall dwell among them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God: And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”¹

Fourthly: The master of the workmen. He who saith “Go,” came into the world. He who saith “Go ye,” himself came: came not by deputy or proxy, but himself came. He who saith “Go ye and preach,” himself preached. He who saith “Go ye and preach the gospel,” is the gospel. He is the manifestation of the love of God, the Christ who died for the ungodly, the Jesus who was born to save, and whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. He who saith “Go into the world to every creature,” is the propitiation for the sins of the world.

Sometimes men who are fastened by selfishness to one place, say to others “Go,” and men who never give, say to others “Give,” and men who never open their lips, say

¹ Revelation xxi. 3, 4.

to others "Preach," and men who are themselves no gospel say, "Go preach the gospel;" but he who came into the world to save sinners saith, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

With such a master, the lack of willing workmen is truly wonderful. An American divine recently penned these words: "Running our eye lately over the catalogue of the college of N——, we observed that out of a class of seventy students only seven had entered the pastoral office;—just one-tenth of a band of young men not undistinguished by native gifts and literary acquirements. Our Saviour's question after healing the ten lepers occurred to us, 'Where are the nine?' This set us to thinking of the vast amount of cultivated intellect within the pale of God's church, the immense number of men gifted with practical gifts and with the richest gift of all—a regenerated heart. They have been brought like the healed lepers under the deepest obligations to the Saviour. An opportunity has been afforded them of doing what angels would delight to do. They have had the opportunity of sanctifying unto their Redeemer's cause their intellect, their social power, and their attainments. Christ asked the consecration; a dying world was in sore need of it; gratitude for the most priceless of all benefits required it; but 'Where are the nine?' Where are the vast majority of those to whom God has granted the most enviable opportunities for glorifying him in the ten thousand open paths of direct spiritual labour? Are there not learning and talent enough which belong to the church, but are employed in secular pursuits, to furnish a pulpit force such as the salvation of the world tarries for? And shall the blood-ransomed church send such a mighty contribution annually to the marts of traffic, to the bar, to the halls of art, science, and legislation, while the vineyard of

the master lieth waste, and the gates of hell are thronged by the in-crowding hosts of lost souls?"

Under the commission which our text records, the gospel was early preached in our land, so that we owe our religious privileges and many of our temporal advantages to the obedience which Christians in former days rendered to our text. And in the continuous working out of this commission, the gospel is now being preached in this our island home; but more, this gospel has passed from human lips or from human pens into our hearts, and we who are saved owe our salvation, in the instrumental sense, to the words before us having been obeyed. And shall we neglect to obey? shall we undervalue obedience as a means of redemption to others?

Not yet has the gospel been carried into all the world and preached to every creature. A vast majority of mankind know not the gospel; and how can they hear of it without preachers? It is not in their sacred books, or they might read it there; it is not in the hearts and minds of their religious leaders and priests, or they might receive it from their lips; it is not a seed lodged deep in the soil of human souls, or it might spring up within their own spirits; it is not a discovery or invention of men, else they who sit in darkness might see a great light. Those who know and who have obeyed the gospel, are held responsible for communicating it, and these two things are certain: first, That if Jesus Christ send the gospel to the world, the world needs the gospel; and, secondly, If Christ bid his disciples carry the gospel to every creature, they can do it.

The whole church of Christ is responsible for the execution of this commission, but individual men are chosen and called by Christ to preach. There may be some of Jesus Christ's elect among yourselves, men who feel that

they are called and divinely consecrated to this work, but they have not as yet given themselves to it. Does not the master of all say in this service to such—"Go!" Go, stay not in the place of private prayer, a man of meditation; tarry not in the church of Christ, a mere worshipper, but go. Go, linger not in sinful hesitation; let not parents or other kindred bind you, but go. Go ye—some go in their fellows, because they themselves are not qualified or not free, but you are free and qualified, then go ye. Go, whithersoever Christ calls you, through the streets and lanes of our Jerusalem, through our Judæa and Samaria, or to the uttermost part of the earth.

But while all cannot preach, all can repeat the faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and all can unite in sending forth men qualified to preach, and in sustaining such men by contributions of property, by manifestations of sympathy, and by prayer. And this we ask from all Christians in this assembly—money, sympathy, and intercession.

We magnify not the workers as men, but we exalt the work and God, when we say that there is no work which hath equal claims upon the disciples of Jesus Christ. The world hath its associations for the advancement of civilization and of learning, for extending commerce and protecting trade, for the encouragement of the arts, useful and fine; and it hath its institutions for healing the sick, feeding the hungry, educating the orphan, relieving the widow, and succouring all who are oppressed and distressed, whether in mind, body, or estate. But what are all these compared with societies for the propagation of the gospel, for sending that gospel into all the world and preaching it to every creature?

Christian men and women, what enterprises, what

societies and associations, do you support most liberally? I suggest this question for several reasons. First, your reply will furnish you with a test of your own state; and, secondly, your answer will show where your energies and resources are most distinctly recognised and most powerfully felt.

Shall the eyes of any Christian be chiefly directed to pleasant pictures and to beautiful statuary, while the image of God has fallen, and lies broken in the dust, and while there is a commission to raise and to repair that image? Shall the thoughts of Christians be directed chiefly to man's dominion over the works of God's hands, while he has lost the mastery of himself, and a power exists which can save him from his captivity and degradation? Only one answer can be given to this question.

Let us take a child and set her in our midst, and make her our instructor in this lesson. A ragged-school teacher went out into the lanes of our city to bring in neglected children. He found a child, the very incarnation of wickedness and wretchedness, and led her to the school. There she heard expounded and applied the parable of the prodigal son. Shortly after, the child was seized by fever, and the teacher visited her. In one of his visits he read this parable, and when he came to the words, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him," the child exclaimed, "Ah! that was just like me! That's good, say it again—'A great way off!' What, ever so far, away, away, like me with the devil? That must be far from God and the Lamb. Yes! I was a great way off. How good! how kind! But I'm afraid I have been worse than that bad son. Still I have said, 'Dear Jesus, I want to love you, I want to get away from the devil;

please help me.' And I think he heard me, for I have felt somehow different ever since. I am not afraid now, no, not one bit." When death was so near that it was supposed that all power of utterance was gone, she aroused herself, and said in a clear and distinct voice, evidently referring to destitute children allowed still to wander through the streets and lanes of the city: "Fetch them in, oh! be sure and fetch them in. Fetch them in and tell them of Jesus, tell them of Jesus; oh! be sure and fetch them in."

This is the commission of the dying ragged-school girl to her teacher, and were we in a position to hear it, a similar charge concerning the heathen would often be given to us British Christians. The dying convert in heathen lands, pointing to his kinsmen and countrymen, would say, "Fetch them in." The dying missionary and catechist and native preacher would say, "Fetch them in." The glorified heathen converts from many nations and kindreds and tongues would say, "Fetch them in." Missionaries who have died in the Lord, and who now rest from their labours, would say, "Fetch them in." But does not one say, "Bring them in?" one whose voice is more solemn than the voice of dying saints, and whose word has more authority and power than the words of "the goodly company of the prophets," or the "noble army of martyrs," or "the holy church throughout the world"?

The Incarnate Word, standing in the midst of his sheep-fold and pointing to the wanderers throughout the world, saith, "Bring them in." Jesus the crucified saith, "Bring them in." He who has sought us and saved us saith, "Bring them in." He who has bought us with a price saith, "Bring them in." And if, as we hear of the commission of a dying ragged-school girl, we feel as if we must go into the streets and lanes of our cities and lead into our

schools all neglected children; do we not feel as though we must obey more perfectly,—obey with all our heart and soul, obey with all our mind and strength, obey by more fervent intercession and more liberal contributions of property, and by entire devotion—him who hath said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature?”

XII

POWER TO PREACH.

Preached on behalf of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, at Great Queen Street Chapel, May 2nd, 1856.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—ACTS i. 8.

POWER belongeth unto God and is inseparable from God, even in idea. The power of God is, moreover God-like,—infinite and eternal. Until the morning of creation power slept, then it awoke, and it has not slumbered since, but has worked ceaselessly, guided by infinite goodness. Nor will it ever cease working. The power of God is no gift or endowment, it is no fruit of education or result of circumstances; it is nothing imparted to the divine nature, it is the underived and independent ability of God to do whatsoever he wills. The power of all other beings is derived, dependent, limited, and separable from existence; so that of them it must be said, They have received power. And all conscious creatures have received power—all, the lowest and the highest, the zoophyte cleaving to the rock and the angel who obeys God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.

We sometimes speak of power existing where there is no life, as when we talk of mechanical and chemical powers; and sometimes where there is life without consciousness, as when we talk of the *vis vitæ* in the vegetable kingdom. But the power of which we shall now speak is conscious power, and power of the noblest kind and of the highest class. The lever as a power is inferior to the paw of the beast, and the forces of chemistry, wonderful beyond expression though they be, are nothing compared with the strength of a good argument or with the force of effective persuasion. The chemical is superior to the mechanical, the animal to the chemical, the intellectual to the animal, but the spiritual, including the moral and religious, is above all. Distinct works require different powers, even when performed by the same worker, and God's rule of distribution is to give ability to every creature according to its work, and to give various talents where he assigns divers occupations. The ark was built by a force different from that which conducted the exodus, and the churches of the Saviour were planted by a power unlike that which led Israel out of Egypt and settled them in Canaan. The failure of many workers arises from their attempting to execute work by energy foreign to the particular operation itself. The highest work requires the highest kind of power. The spiritual can only be wrought by the spiritual.

The desire for power is constitutional to man. It was implanted as a means of preserving native ability, and as an impulse in seeking supernatural aid. The true use of the thirst is now as it was in the beginning. Sinfulness and actual transgression have impaired extensively the native power of man, reducing even the animal force of mankind, but impairing chiefly their spiritual energy. Within the gates of the first paradise power possessed was the theme of

praise; outside the garden of Eden power lacked and needed has ever been the subject of complaint. Still, even here, outside the paradise which we have lost, all who receive commissions from God may from God obtain power to execute them. That which God bids us do, he stands ready to help us to do; if he gives work, he is waiting to give power. Hence, when the apostles were sent as witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth, it was promised them that they should receive "power."

To be weak and to be unaided is to be miserable, especially in working. Weakness in working involves more wretchedness than weakness in suffering. They who languish in affliction become, in the degree of their exhaustion, insensible to their sorrow; but they who labour in weakness are kept awake to their impotency, and they increase their misery by every act and with every step. The sick mother, if too enfeebled to concern herself with the affairs of her household, suffers nothing in comparison with that mother who, weak and weary, carries her last-born in her withered arms, nurses it at her exhausted bosom, and with her own hands, worn thin by toil and sorrow, spreads daily a table for a large family. And the misery of weakness in working is great in the degree that the heart is devoted to exertion. To will to do, to long to do, to delight to do, and yet to be impotent in doing, is wretchedness superadded to weakness. They whose hearts are on fire to do some special work, for which they find themselves powerless, know by bitter experience that to be weak is to be miserable. Let us rejoice that power and God are inseparable, that power, like God, is eternal, and that omnipotence exists nowhere but in connection with Infinite Love. Then, although we may not have natural ability for particular work, for all work which is our duty we may receive power.

The text was spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ. He has risen from the dead and has been recognised by his apostles and by many of his disciples. He has not yet ascended, but is spending an interval of forty days in speaking to the apostles of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He charges the eleven not to quit Jerusalem, but to tarry in the holy city for the fulfilment of the promise of the Father, even baptism with the Holy Ghost. Still intent upon the political emancipation and the temporal deliverance of Israel, the apostles ask, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" And Jesus saith, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Withdrawing their thoughts from the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, Jesus Christ fixed their attention upon the restoration of the world to God, declared them to be chosen instruments in this work, and assured them that for this service they should receive "power." "Receive" power! Were not the apostles matured men, and had they not ripe manhood's power? Were they not Hebrews, and had they not the characteristic energy of the seed of Abraham? They had been working men and men of business, and had they not daily strengthened their natural faculties by exertion? Were they not Christians, and had they not found new power in their new life as Christ's disciples? Moreover, had they not been called to the apostleship more than three years before, and had not dormant energies been awakened by the call? Moreover, had they not already employed their faculties and resources in Christian work, and in some measure shown themselves

strong? Yet now it is said, "Ye shall receive power." The various power of which we have spoken was truly possessed by the apostles, and yet the betrayal and crucifixion of Christ had manifested much weakness, even the weakness of a low spiritual vitality. They were soon fevered and agitated. They could bear but little, and do but little of the highest class of work. Had the eleven watched with their master in his agony, adhered to him in his betrayal, acknowledged him in his trial and crucifixion, and watched for his resurrection in full assurance of faith and hope, we should have said of them, they are "like trees planted by rivers of water, that bring forth their fruit in their season; even their leaves do not wither."¹ We should have said, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree, they shall grow as a cedar in Lebanon."² But, as we see the apostles forsake Christ and flee; as we behold them bury their fondest hopes in their master's sepulchre, we are moved to cry, "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass, the grass withereth, the flower fadeth."³ And what is the power which they lacked? That which the Greek called power—knowledge, wisdom, skill in reasoning, eloquence in speech, artistic skill? That which the Roman called power—martial courage and prowess, faculties for organization and for rule? That which the Jew called power—ability to produce and multiply signs and wonders? Not the power in which the Greek and Roman gloried, not the power which the Jew coveted, but power like unto that by which the grass, instead of withering, might continue green before a blighting wind, and the flowers of the field, instead of fading, might continue fresh

¹ Psalm i. 3.² Psalm xcii. 12.³ Isaiah xl. 6-8.

and fair beneath a scorching sun—the power of life, fuller life, stronger life, more enduring life, lasting life, God-like life.

Let us look at this truth as taught by the text—supernatural power necessary in the preaching of the gospel and communicated by the Holy Ghost.

The word “power” sometimes signifies authority and control, as, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”¹ “The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.”² “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.”³ “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”⁴ But this is not its meaning in our text. The word here rendered “power” is a different word from that similarly translated in the preceding verse. Jesus Christ has used the word before us in the following cases: “Thine is the kingdom and the power.”⁵ “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”⁶ “To every man according to his several ability.”⁷ “Till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.”⁸ “I give unto you power over all the power of the enemy.”⁹ “Until ye be endued with power from on high.”¹⁰ In Mark it is rendered “virtue”: “And Jesus immediately knowing that virtue had gone out of him.”¹¹ In Luke we read, “In the power of the Spirit.”¹² “With authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits.”¹³ “The power of the Lord was present to heal them.”¹⁴ “There went virtue out of him, and healed them all.”¹⁵ “Power and authority over all devils.”¹⁶ And Paul says, “It is the power of God unto salvation to

¹ Acts i. 7.² Matt. ix. 6.³ John x. 18.⁴ John xvii. 2.⁵ Matt. vi. 13.⁶ Matt. xxii. 29.⁷ Matt. xxv. 15.⁸ Mark ix. 1.⁹ Luke x. 19.¹⁰ Luke xxiv. 49.¹¹ Mark v. 30.¹² Luke iv. 14.¹³ Luke iv. 36.¹⁴ Luke v. 17.¹⁵ Luke vi. 19.¹⁶ Luke ix. 1.

every one that believeth.”¹ “It is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power.”² Although the word rendered “power” does sometimes mean authority, we take it in the passage before us, as elsewhere, to represent not authority, but ability. And in what does this ability consist? The power which Jesus Christ promised the first preachers of the gospel was not carnal power, it was not animal force, ability to use the sword, to gather and command an army, or to man and control a fleet. It was not mental power, capacious understanding, strong reason and vivid imagination, ability to accumulate learning and to acquire knowledge of science and skill in the arts. It was not a high degree of mental cultivation, ability to imbibe and to assimilate knowledge and to express intelligence in refinement of taste and in a philosophic style of life. It was not the fortitude of the Roman soldier, the chivalry of the Roman knight, the administrative power of the Roman statesman, the wisdom of the Greek, or the stern inflexibility of the Jew. It was not the natural warmth of John, the readiness of Peter, the practicalness of James, or the promptitude of Matthew. It was not even being mighty in the Scriptures. It was power superadded to the natural and moral, to the mental and to the spiritual. It was power like that which bursts the seed and develops the germ, power like that which opens the bud and shows the flower, power like that which tears the blossom and produces the fruit, power like that by which the eagle renews its youth, and by which the sick man casts off disease, and by which the feeble infant rises into strong manhood,—the power of life, of fuller, stronger, richer, diviner life. In this more highly animated state of the whole spirit, the first preachers would find an increase of all power. The body might be named as an exception, though

¹ Rom. i. 16. ² 1 Cor. xv. 43.

even here, if the body were not stronger for a strengthened spirit, the burden of the flesh would be much lighter. But resulting from more power of life, there would be increased power of eye and ear and tongue and hand and foot and heart, increased power in the whole man. The eye of the spirit would be keen and strong. There would be power of enlarged capacity for knowledge, and of enlarged knowledge; we mean, of those things of the Spirit of God which are spiritually discerned, and of all things which constitute the theme of the Christian preacher. The eye of the newborn infant sees nothing but light. The eyes of the sick and of the aged see only adjacent objects and chiefly outlines, and in these cases the power of life is but small. But where life is full, the eye is clear and strong, and thus the discernment of revealed truth depends upon the amount of spiritual vitality. "That which we have seen with our eyes; for the life was manifested and we have seen it; that which we have seen declare we unto you,"¹ writes the Apostle John. Such knowledge to a preacher is power. According to the divine animation of soul and spirit will be the power of faith, and the man who is strong in faith is strong in power.

In the degree of life there will be the power of wisdom, which consists, remarks John Owen, "in the due consideration of all persons, occasions, circumstances, temptations of men and churches, of their state, condition, strength or weakness, growth or decay, obedience or failings, their capacities and progress, with the holy accommodation of the preacher in what he teacheth or delivereth in meekness, in vehemency, in tenderness, in sharpness, in severe arguings and pathetic exhortations, with all other ways and means suited unto his holy ends in the propagation of the gospel

¹ 1 John i. 1-3.

and edification of the church"—“a peculiar spiritual skill and ability to manage the gospel in its administration unto the advantage and furtherance of the truth, especially in the defence of it, when called unto the trial with its adversaries.” “And as, where it is too much wanting, we see what woful mistakes and miscarriages men otherwise good and holy will run themselves into, unto the great disadvantage of the gospel, so the real enjoyment and exercise of it in any competent measure is the life and grace of the ministry.” Sagacity and skill rise with the different grades of beings, and improve, except when decay begins, with the successive stages of life. In like manner the wisdom of which we speak increases with the godly animation of the spirit. According to the degree in which the soul is divinely vitalized, will be the power of love,—a central force this, without which the professed Christian worker is nothing.

A high degree of life will secure another kind of power essential to the Christian preacher, the power of confidence and boldness. Distrust unnerves, fear paralyzes. And while distrust and timidity impair the power of the Christian preacher, if they be seen by hearers, they confirm them in impenitence and hardness of heart. Paul tells the Corinthians, “I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.”¹ But the trembling was only in the sight of God, the fear was brought into subjection, and the weakness was felt before and after his working, but not in his work. Who could have suspected Paul of weakness, fear, and much trembling, had they seen him in this very Corinth shake his raiment in the faces of the enraged and blaspheming Jews, and say, “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles,”² and then continue in the city teaching the

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 3.

² Acts xviii. 6.

citizens, in spite of the most deadly opposition and persecution? The important connection of boldness with preaching appears in the following Scriptures: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled."¹ "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word."² "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with boldness."³ Of Paul it is said: "He preached boldly at Damascus."⁴ "At Jerusalem he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus."⁵ In Iconium, "Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord."⁶ At Ephesus, "He went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months."⁷ Paul asks the Ephesians to pray, "That I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, that thereof I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak;"⁸ and to the Philippians expresses his "earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body."⁹ These quotations show that the first preachers attached great importance to confidence and boldness, and great moment to these states of heart as involving power.

But knowledge, faith, wisdom, love, confidence, and boldness, are useless to the Christian preacher unless utterance is given to him—that which Jesus Christ calls "a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."¹⁰ The speech to which we now refer is rather forcible than full—holy not hasty.

¹ Acts iv. 13.² Acts iv. 29.³ Acts iv. 31.⁴ Acts ix. 27.⁵ Acts ix. 29.⁶ Acts xiv. 3.⁷ Acts xix. 8.⁸ Ephes. vi. 19, 20.⁹ Phil. i. 20.¹⁰ Luke xxi. 15.

“Ability of speech in time and season is an especial gift of God, and that eminently with respect unto the spiritual things of the gospel; but a profluency of speech, venting itself on all occasions and on no occasions, making men open their mouths wide when indeed they should shut them and open their ears, and to pour out all that they know and what they do not know, making them angry if they are not heard, and impatient if they are contradicted, is an unconquerable fortification against all true spiritual wisdom.”¹ The utterance which is useful in the kingdom of Christ is subdued and chastened speech, lacking that which the Greek would have called “excellency,” but containing largely that which Solomon calls, words well-spoken, acceptable words, words in season, words of the wise. It has been well observed, that “the tongue discovers the state of the mind no less than that of the body.” “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”² Life in the heart will secure earnest and vivacious language.

Where there is full and strong life there will also be a strong disposition to activity. In this case works will come forth like water from a well, and as fruit from a bearing tree. Exertion will be natural, not artificial. Labour will be self-imposed. Nothing will be done by constraint, but everything will be accomplished willingly; nothing by bribe or by bait, but everything by a ready mind. The fully animated soul does not wait for work, but asks for it: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”³ It does not measure its endeavours by precedent and example, but if it have ability and opportunity, it labours more abundantly than all. It requires rather restraint than constraint. It needs not the “Thou shalt” and “Thou must” to goad it, but is ever ready to exclaim, “Wist ye not that I must be

¹ Owen, iv. 459.

² Matt. xii. 34.

³ Acts ix, 6.

about my Father's business?"¹ "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."²

Let us observe, then, that the power of full spiritual life, —leading to knowledge and its power, faith and love and their power, securing wisdom and its power, confidence and boldness and their power, suitable utterance and its power, a disposition to activity and its power,—is the power promised to Christ's apostles. It was not the power of working miracles, a temporary and uncertain faculty ; it was not the power of speaking in new and unlearned tongues, a power which, existing alone, must be a trap and a snare, and an instrument of mischief ; it was an abiding power, power the root and spring of all needful power, power within, as a well of water springing up to everlasting life, power that should really be full capacity for the work of Christ's witnesses, and the manifestation of which should appear as divine authority to undertake that work, even the power of a rich and full spiritual life. But you may ask, Is not every Christian quickened? We answer, Yes, verily, every true Christian is born again into eternal life. But the power of ordinary religious life falls short of the demand which is made on the Christian preacher. The apostles had been quickened, but their vitality was low, the pulse was feeble, the eye was dim, the ear was dull, the hands hung down, the knees smote each other, and Christ promised them "power." Then they should run and not be weary, labour and never faint, hear every divine whisper, see Jesus, see God, see heaven opened, speak with a loosened tongue, and say of themselves and of each other, in a sense not common to the Christian, Now we live.

And what was to produce this increase of power, this increase of the power of life? Not influences from around

¹ Luke ii, 49.

² John iv. 34.

them or from beneath them, but influences from above them. In a time of drought, when vegetable life languishes, what will revive the withered grass and the drooping flowers? Not husbandry, not manure, not any of the applications of agricultural science and art, but rain from heaven. What makes the difference between life at the north pole or life in the temperate zone, and life in the tropics? What but this, that in the tropics there is more sun? There, with less labour, there is more life because there is more sun. More rain and more sunshine give more life. And in the degree of life is power. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

"Mighty Spirit, dwell with me,
I myself would mighty be,
Mighty so as to prevail
Where unaided man must fail."

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."¹

The Holy Spirit renders a common service to mankind, and a special service to the church of Christ. And the service which the Spirit renders to the church has reference both to personal Christianity and to Christian usefulness, to all that is necessary for the existence and subsistence of the church, and to the work which the church is required to accomplish in the world. It is of this work that we now speak. One service rendered by the Holy Ghost, with respect to this work, is thus spoken of by the sacred writers: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us."² "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the

¹ Zechariah iv. 6.

² Rom. xii. 6.

manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom ; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit ; to another faith by the same Spirit ; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit ; to another the working of miracles ; to another prophecy ; to another discerning of spirits ; to another divers kinds of tongues ; to another the interpretation of tongues : but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."¹ But the power of which we have been speaking is not the gifts, the gracious largesses, the spiritual endowments, the distributions and ministrations here named, but that ability and energy which turns these to good account. Christ's promise in my text is not of powers, but power. And the source of this power is said to be the Holy Ghost. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Here is power, communicated not by a thing but by a being, not by an influence but by a person, not by a being through some instrumentality, but directly by the being himself—power imparted to spirit by spirit, given to a living one by the author and source of life ; power communicated by one who knows perfectly our weakness, and by one who is himself infinite and almighty ; power imparted to preach by him who moved holy men to write the scriptures ; power to preach Christ supplied by him whose work it is to glorify Christ ; power to convert sinners from the error of their ways, given by him who is the only and all-sufficient regenerator and sanctifier of the human soul, by him with whom is all power of a spiritual kind. And if we be asked how this power is received from the source of which we speak, we answer, not by a particular visit or by an occasional ministration, but by the communion

¹ 1 Corinthians xii. 4-11.

of the Holy Ghost. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are powers, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost is a source of power. Let us illustrate this more fully. I see a man hungry, and I give him money : that money is a power to buy bread ; but the hungry man is destitute through lack of ability to earn his bread. I devote myself to that man, awaken a spirit of self-dependence and self-respect, arouse his dormant energies, quicken his whole nature, and lead him into a path of honest industry, and now I have given him not a power, but power. An ignorant man applies to me for enlightenment on some particular subject ; I answer his questions, and the knowledge I have given him is a power, but I awaken a thirst for all knowledge in that man, and I lead him to fountains of information, and now I have endowed him not with a power, but with power. I see a man timid and feeble in his whole nature, I draw near to him, I quiet his fears, awaken hope and inspire him with courage, and he becomes, under my influence, sanguine and brave. To this man I give not powers or a power, but power. And thus, while the Holy Ghost, by endowing men with knowledge, wisdom, ability to work miracles and to speak with tongues, bestows particular powers, by entering into fellowship with them he communicates vital energy and general ability. And to this the Saviour pointed when he said, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Hitherto the Holy Spirit had not entered into full fellowship with the spirits of men, but now he is to dwell with all Christ's disciples a present help to every man according to his need, and to them who are called to be Christ's witnesses, a special help, a source of power to preach and to teach. Now if he who walketh with wise men shall be wise, and if he be blessed who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, if as iron sharpeneth iron

so doth the countenance of a man his friend, what must be the effects to Christ's witnesses of communion with the Holy Ghost! Think of the Holy Ghost as a Being, infinite and eternal, full of life, almighty, perfect in knowledge, of consummate wisdom, devoted to Christ's kingdom, the author of our new creation, the good Spirit, full of mercy and pity and lovingkindness; and think of fellowship with that Spirit! As the dew to tender herbs, as rain to mown grass, as sunlight to flowers, as sun-heat to fruit, as fire to the benumbed with cold, as bread to the perishing with hunger, as water to the fainting with thirst, as the mother's bosom to the new-born babe, as the father's hand to the child assaying to walk, as a private tutor to a backward pupil, as a firm and fast friend to one who hath a timid spirit, as the spring to a river and the fountain to a stream, and as the sun in the centre of the planets, so is the Holy Ghost to Christ's witnesses.

“ Enthroned on high, Almighty Lord,
The Holy Ghost send down;
Fulfil in us thy faithful word,
And all thy mercies crown.

“ Though on our heads no tongues of fire
Their wondrous powers impart,
Grant, Saviour, what we more desire—
Thy Spirit in our heart.”

There are few things more pleasant than to work with power. Nor is the enjoyment impaired by the power having come to us as special assistance, if the help has been wisely and graciously administered. And there are few spectacles more interesting than that of men working with conscious and undoubted power. A little child balancing itself upon its tiny feet and running alone, a school-boy acquiring quickly and surely literary art and making the treasures of knowledge his own, a lad learning a trade or

profession easily and yet accurately, a tradesman or merchant conducting an extensive commercial concern with complete system and perfect order, a manufacturer bending natural elements and products to his purpose by the fertility of invention and the dominion of capital, an artist colouring canvas sweetly and richly, or chiselling marble into forms of sublimity and beauty, a man of letters writing books that shall never die, a man of science unlocking the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, an orator taking captive by his words the eyes, ears, thoughts, and souls of a multitude of hearers, diplomatists and politicians arousing and hushing the voice of the people and turning the hearts of princes whither they will, the commander leading a fleet or an army to victory, are illustrations of working power, upon which we cannot look without interest, and of which we cannot speak without excitement. And as more power is needed to deliver than to direct, to redeem than to sustain, we look with greater interest upon the physician healing sickness, and upon the surgeon removing diseased flesh or bone, than upon those persons whose avocations supply us with food, and minister to the comfort and convenience of life. It is a glorious sight, power employed to save! A fireman entering a burning dwelling and plucking the sleeping inmates from the flames, even the water-dog snatching a child from a watery grave, are great and glorious illustrations of power put forth for salvation,—but a greater than these, a greater than all, is here.

The highest manifestation of redeeming power is in Jesus Christ saving sinners. See him cast off the form of God and take the form of man, quietly as the earth in autumn changes her summer attire for winter raiment, and at evening casts off the bright garments of the day for the sable vestments of the night. See him come down from heaven, not with

the haste of a falling star, but with movements regular and sure as planets in their orbit. Mark him tread his appointed path from Bethlehem to Calvary. It is a rough path, and he never trips. It is a crooked path, and he is never lost. It is a bloody path, and he never faints. Heaven gives him work to do, and to do it is his meat and drink. Before the day is ended, it is finished. Heaven allots him suffering, and he drinks the cup. Heaven bids him die, and he lays down his life. Heaven calls him from the grave,—but surely power was lost in death. Calls him from the grave? in figure surely, not in reality? Not in figure, but in reality. And can he obey this call? Watch! A great stone fills the door of the sepulchre. There is a seal binding the stone to the lintel. A guard is there. And within, cold as the stone, still as the cavern, unconscious as the rock, the body of Jesus is lain. A voice from heaven saith, Come forth!—Can he come? “I have power to take it again,” said he, as he laid down his life. Has he this power? The seal breaks: the stone moves: the sepulchre is open: and he comes—he comes. The Lord is risen indeed. Heaven bids him regather his scattered followers, and they are soon around him, as when a hen gathereth her brood under her wings. And now, having opened a fountain for sin and for all uncleanness, having provided robes of righteousness and garments of salvation, having opened wells of living water and given bread of eternal life, he is called back to heaven, and as an eagle rising in the firmament, he passes to the skies and sits down at the right hand of God. This is the first manifestation of power, and the second is found in the work of those who are Christ’s witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth. To wean a Jew from altar and sacrifice, to withdraw a priest from the service of the temple, to purify and reform the licentious Corinthian, subdue the haughty

spirit of the Roman, renew the strength of the enervated Ephesian, lead these to Jesus Christ, or indeed to lead any man to Christ, and by Christ to God, is a work of noblest kind, requiring mightiest power. And if there be a work in which we may expect to receive power, it is surely in this. A weak witness to Christ, an ignorant witness, a foolish witness, a shamefaced witness, a doubting witness, a stammering witness, a witness too weak to be heard, a witness attempting to testify with merely human power, is not worthy of Christ, and is a spectacle over which angels might weep. Think of what the divinely strengthened preacher of Christ's holy gospel may do, by recognising what the preaching of the gospel has already done. It has civilized many nations, destroyed innumerable idols and false gods, unlocked the treasures of useful knowledge, improved the arts, extended science, widened commerce, quickened trade, founded hospitals, created schools, broken the rods of oppressors, struck off the chains of millions of slaves, checked the harsh government of rulers and the anarchy of subjects, restored woman to her primitive position, awakened tenderness in the mother and fondness in the father, taught dutifulness to the child and loyalty to the subject and justice to the ruler, given peace and joy to the home, order and liberty to the state, dignity and glory to nations, and eternal life to a multitude which no man can number out of all nations and kindreds, tribes and tongues. And can the world afford to lose this preaching? The extraction of the influences of Christian preaching from the world would send back society to an antediluvian state, while the continuance and extension of preaching is the power of God for the salvation of the world. And as we mark how few are yet saved, we feel most solemnly that the great want of the world is not schemes for civilization, not new political

institutions, not literature, not science, not the arts, but the gospel, and men to preach the gospel, who have from heaven received power. And if there be a community in Christendom which should be foremost in carrying the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, and which should be a pattern of power in the work of evangelization, it is that section of the church of Christ which bears the name of Wesley. The conversion of the masses outside the churches was Wesley's aim, and power in preaching was Wesley's ambition. "With the machinery of our great associations under his control, and with the heathen world now so near at hand as it is, Wesley would have thought himself at length to have reached the very position he was born to fill, with six hundred millions of pagans at his feet, and a revenue of a million sterling, such as he would have made it, at his command."¹

Fathers and brethren, work out the aims of your illustrious and sainted founder, preserve the genius of your community, and covet earnestly that best gift, which Christ promised when he said, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

Christian young men, have you received power to preach? If you have this ability, what business have you at the bench of the mechanic? at the counter of trade? in the house of merchandise? in the courts of law? in the walks of literature? The gift of power is a divine call. Be not disobedient to the voice of God. Remember Jonah as a warning, and the young man Saul as an encouragement. Who among you is willing to-day to consecrate himself a witness for Christ? Bribe and bait I will not offer you, though I could speak of immortal honours, of boundless wealth, and crowns of glory that fade not away. Rather

¹ Taylor's "Wesley," p. 193.

would I remind you that fidelity to your heavenly master, and loyalty to the King of kings, demand that you should follow the vocation for which your Redeemer has qualified you. Students for the Christian ministry, have you received power which specially adapts you to preach to the heathen, and are you contemplating work at home? What doest thou here, if your right place be India, China, Africa, British America, or the West Indies? Are you held back by love of kindred and of country, love of ease, or fear of evil? Loosen the cords which detain you, and go forth. The Lord shall go before thee, and the God of Israel shall be thy rereward. Have you heard God calling you to the heathen, and are you devoutly preparing to obey? Remember, brothers, that true preaching power consists not in intellectual vigour, mental attainments, or literary distinction, but in a high degree of spiritual life. Try not to substitute natural force and the acquisitions of learning for the power derived from communion with the Holy Ghost. Neglect not the divine gift of power that is in you.

Fellow-labourers in the ministry and in the mission field, some of you, like the apostles, have received power, and are witnesses to Christ with power. Can your divine commission be confirmed by mere human, though ecclesiastical, endorsement? Can your orders be made more holy by any creature sanction? Can higher authority be given you than that which you have, in your possession of power, or could fuller power be imparted than that you receive from the Holy Ghost? Can the most ambitious, or the most timid, desire more distinct seals of their apostleship than those you have, in the converts from the ministry of your brethren and of yourselves? Sheep once wandering, now restored, acknowledge you; glorified spirits (from many lands), waiting to recognise you in heaven, acknowledge

you ; the dead who rest from their labours, your ancestors and predecessors before the throne of God, acknowledge you ; the angels who minister to you as you minister, and the celestial choir who have rejoiced and sung over your converts, acknowledge you ; hell, as it sometimes trembles at your power of prayer and of preaching, acknowledges you ; the Spirit by his anointing, and by the renewal of the holy unction, acknowledges you ; the chief Shepherd by many a sign acknowledges you ; the God and Father of all, by the light of his countenance and his blessing on your labours, acknowledges you. And what more can you need or desire ? More power to do more work, grace to be faithful to the end, help in all your need,—but surely no higher sanction, no better recognition, except the acknowledgment for which we all must wait, the “ Well done ” of our good master in the last great day. Until then let our great care be to preserve and to use our power. “ Woe unto the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock ! the sword shall be upon his arm and upon his right eye : his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.”¹ Are you conscious of loss of power ? Let us remember the Saviour’s law, “ Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance ; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”²

Directors and constituents of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, pray to God our Father to give power to many young men in your fellowship to become missionaries, and to give to your present missionaries increased power. Elect for the missionary field only those who have received power. Train your students with reference to this power. Prayer for men with power, is the chief request I make to-day. We ask for money, regular, liberal, cheerful con-

¹ Zech. xi. 17.

² Matt. xxv. 29.

tributions, but we ask more earnestly for prayer. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers, and powerful labourers, into the harvest. Pray that your churches may receive more fully the Holy Ghost. Then your young men shall prophesy with the strength of ancient days, and your old men shall renew their youth. I know that the Spirit of God is already with you ; but the union may be closer and the fellowship more intense. You have the full light of the morning, we covet for you the light of noon-day. You have the quickening warmth of spring suns, we covet for you the fruit-producing heat of summer. You have the waters that flow softly, we covet for you a stream that shall overflow its channels and its banks. You have fruit that abounds to your account, we desire for you more fruit. You have received power, but we desire that you may know the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe.

There are seasons in the history of the church when power is renewed, and more power given. In such a season your church came into being. We think that another time of refreshing is at hand. The church that is most forward in prayer, and most elevated in expectation, will first receive it. Come, Holy Spirit, come !

I hear a voice from heaven saying, "If ye then being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"¹ Ask him ! What, have we only to ask him? And is he much more willing to give his Spirit than our parents were to give us good things? They gave to the youngest and to the weakest, and to the most wayward and wilful, to the sick and most helpless. They gave to all, gave cheerfully, constantly, lovingly, and pitifully.

¹ Luke xi. 13.

And they gave us power. And is God more willing than they? We know he is more able—is he more ready? Yes, verily, as much more ready as our Father in heaven is greater than our parents on earth. Then let us ask him for more power on behalf of all preachers, especially our missionaries, and the gospel as preached by them shall be more than ever the power of God unto salvation.

XIII

POWER TO HEAL.

"And he healed them that had need of healing."—LUKE ix. 11.

THIS is written concerning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is not my purpose to discuss the miracles which Jesus wrought, nor is it my intention to describe the character of the Great Wonder-worker. My text is chosen as indicating that portion of the Saviour's ministrations, which, in spirit at least, we can imitate. "He healed them that had need of healing," and in doing this, he has left us an example that we should follow his steps.

A great writer of fiction has remarked, that "a man might be a great healer, if he would, without being a great doctor." We may add, without being a worker of miracles.

"A man may be a great healer without being a great doctor." The doctor, so far as his profession is concerned, has to do chiefly, if not entirely, with diseases of the body. He is an agent and instrument, the saviour and the healer of the body. As a friend to the patient, he often ministers to the mind and heart; but these services are distinct from his profession. Without being a doctor a man may be a great healer.

*"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow?"*

Around us all there are sick minds, wounded spirits, broken hearts and diseased souls, to be cured and healed and relieved by means which God has given us. Around us all there are wounds in families, wounds in friendships, and wounds in communities, to which we may apply a healing power. "Whole," "sound," "healthy," are words descriptive of but few persons, and of but few households, and of but few communities. In this world of ours there is evidently a great work of healing to be wrought. There is a great need of healing, and there are great healing powers. Let us take a few examples and set them in our midst.

1. Before us is a child morally diseased. His heart is sick of falsehood, dishonesty, and sloth. He inherits these diseases from his parents, or he has taken them from companions, or they have sprung up we know not how. They appear in the character and conduct, as distinctly and as hideously as any eruptive disease in the body. The child becomes the charge of a nurse, or governess, or teacher, or tutor. The salaried, or unsalaried, custodian of the child devotes himself to heal these moral diseases. He inspires the child with a love of truth and with a hatred of falsehood. He produces an intelligent sense of the rights of property. He breathes into the child a desire of activity and love of work. The lying child becomes truthful, the dishonest child is now upright, and the idle child is made diligent. Now is not the man or woman who has done this a great healer? Let not the Sunday-school teacher or the ragged-school teacher imagine that healing of this description is his work alone. Moral disease is as really among the children of the middle and upper classes as with the children of the lowest class, and whoever in the nursery of a rich man's house, or in the school-room of a princely mansion, or in the classroom of a day-school, or in the rooms of a ragged-school,

cures a child of moral disease, is a great healer. God ever work with you, and speed you, ye physicians of young souls!

2. Our eye now rests on a widowed mother. The day was when life's sacred burden was shared, and when in the battle of life one stronger than she fought at her side. But the arm on which she leaned is palsied in the grave, the eye to which she looked for guidance is closed by death, and she treads the path of womanhood and motherhood alone. To what extent her heart is broken and her spirit wounded, God only knows. Sometimes the tempest of her sorrow sends up from her heart showers of tears, but generally her grief is a keen dry wind blowing through all the sanctuaries of the soul. Before that wind nothing blossoms, nothing ripens; the buds of hope are shrivelled, the fruits of joy are unmaturing, the leaves of peace and gladness are withered. But the widow is not childless. Her first-born is a son. On the day when his father died he vowed to be, so far as he could be, a husband as well as a child. He renewed this vow at his father's grave, and very often and very solemnly has this vow been remembered. The lad performs his vows. Instead of spending leisure time in hunting after pleasure, he devotes the time unoccupied by business to the society of his mother. Instead of spending his earnings on himself, he, by a careful economy, sustains or helps to support his mother and her other children. His youthful powers are at the command of the widow for any service which he can render. He has never said, "Mother, I love you;" but his deeds are words of affection and sympathy. By ten thousand acts of kindness, and by a most considerate behaviour, he makes his mother feel that her sorrow is his, and that her burden and cares are his own. Since the lamp of his father's love was put out, he has daily trimmed his own lamp with holy oil, so that the darkness of the home

might not be as oppressively felt. Or to bring our illustration more into harmony with the words in which our topic was announced, since the day his mother's heart was broken, he has never ceased to strive to bind it up. And are not such sons of widowed mothers great healers? God Almighty bless the lads who strive to keep want and care from a bereaved mother, and whose hands are lovingly stretched out to wipe away tears from their mother's eyes!

3. This work of healing is not confined to either sex. God by death removes the wife and mother, and the heart of the husband and father is wounded to the core. Some wives are nothing better than pretty or elegant pieces of furniture, and some are cumbersome household furniture without gracefulness or beauty. There are wives who, instead of being helpmeets to their husbands, are hindrances in every path of life. Moreover, some mothers are parents only in name. There are mothers who wholly neglect their children, or who delegate all maternal duties to others. The nurse and the governess and the tutor are in some cases, and for all purposes of training, the mother; while the parent acts as though no duties or cares or responsibilities attached to her position. When such wives and mothers die, the shutters may be closed and the blinds drawn down, mourning attire may be put on, and a sad procession formed to convey the body to the grave, but there are no aching hearts or wounded spirits or bleeding souls. There are cases, however, in which the death of a wife is the reducing of a husband to but half-life, and the apparent destruction of home joys and home advantages, so far as the children are concerned. Now sometimes we see a daughter, perhaps only in her teens, devote herself to fill the vacant place of the mother and the wife. With the quick eye of womanly sagacity, she discerns all that soothes and all that irritates

and all that satisfies her father. With the whole strength of her young hands she devotes herself to protect him from vexation, and to bring around him all that will minister peace and joy. She spreads the mantle of silence over occurrences which he need not know, and which if he knew would vex him. The spirit of her mother is within her. It is as though the mother were employed as a ministering spirit to strengthen this child's hands, and to hold up her feet in the work and in the path to which she has been prematurely introduced. And while she strives to fill the void which makes her father desolate, she is no less concerned to be a mother to her sisters and brothers. They know not their loss, but she has measured it, and though she knows it to be irreparable, she strives to her utmost to reduce its pressure. Verily, the eldest daughter in many a widower's home is a great healer. May the friend of the Mary and Martha in the gospels be the strength and the helper of all such !

4. The age in which we live does not appear favourable to firm and fast friendships. It fosters an almost universal acquaintance, but does little to create and sustain friendship. There are, however, counterparts of Jonathan and David. There are men and women bound to each other by pure affection, by deep sympathy, and by strong confidence. Life is full of paradoxes. There are some slight causes which will destroy the strongest friendship. Great causes will not always impair it. A sarcastic and disparaging speech made by a friend concerning a friend in his absence, and repeated by some mischief-maker, will invariably disturb friendship, while an angry altercation, or some injury to person or to property, will often leave friendship unharmed.

When alienation begins, it increases at a very rapid rate. The rust-spot multiplies apace. The mildew spreads quickly.

The rift in the lute becomes longer and longer. Now there are those whose natural disposition or Christian principle inclines them to try to stop and fill up the rift, and to wipe off the mildew, and to remove the rust-spot,—to speak plainly, to arrest the alienation; and such as are inclined are generally able. “Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.”¹ The peace-makers are divine healers.

There is a spiritual disease very like that malady of body known as atrophy. It is a condition of weakness in the direction of all that is good and godly, accompanied by decided power in the direction of evil. The Apostle Paul refers to it when he observes, “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”² For this disease there is but one physician, and there is but one remedy. That physician is Jesus Christ, God manifest in flesh, and the remedy is that salvation which is by faith in his name. All who bring mankind to this physician are great healers. John Baptist was a great healer, when he pointed his disciples to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. Andrew and Philip were great healers, when they brought Peter and Nathanael to Jesus. The woman of Samaria was a great healer, when she brought the men of her city to the Messiah. All are “healers” who guide men to Jesus. And we may remark, in one word, that all who show hospitality to the stranger, who clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoner, and minister to the thirsty and hungry, impart religious benefit and do good in any form, are great healers. There are many wounds and numerous diseases in our human nature, and there are powers and means of healing answering to these diseases and wounds. I desire to awaken your

¹ Matt. v. 9.

² Rom. v. 6.

ambition to be in this world of sorrow and sin—great healers.

1. You may heal by the tongue. "How forcible are right words."¹ "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life."² "The tongue of the just is as choice silver."³ "The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable."⁴ "Pleasant words are as a honeycomb."⁵ "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."⁶ Words fitly spoken heal. Words of instruction and guidance heal. Words of admonition and of consolation heal. Speaking in the time to speak, and as we ought to speak, is a great healing power. How much is in the power of the tongue! In every moment of time it is wounding spirits and breaking hearts, and spreading moral and spiritual disease. According to the mischief wrought by evil tongues is the demand for the healing power of the tongue. He who at first made all things right, and who seeks to restore all things to the right character and condition, is willing and able to revive and to bless the healing power of human speech.

2. You may heal by the light of the countenance. Honest laughter has a stirring power. Genuine and kindly smiles have a healing power. As the beams of the sun to the sun's disk, so are genuine smiles to a loving heart. Frowns wither. Immoveable countenances chill and freeze. A countenance alive with sympathy and bright with love, heals. Our faces are in some respects that which our mothers have made them, but in other respects they are that which our hearts make them. The heart being right, there will be light in the countenance. God forbid, however, that any man should try to make up a bright face. Such a face is a mask, not a countenance. David felt the power of the

¹ Job vi. 25. ² Prov. xv. 4. ³ Prov. x. 20. ⁴ Prov. x. 32.

⁵ Prov. xvi. 24.

⁶ Prov. xv. 1.

face, when he spake thus : " Hope thou in God ; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."¹ And Solomon when he wrote : " Iron sharpeneth iron ; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."²

3. You may heal by the hand, by what the hand may find to do in the sphere of ministration and of service. All help has healing power, if delicately and wisely and kindly administered. Help may be so ministered as to make the diligent idle, and so given as to increase the indolence of the slothful. Help may be so ministered as to destroy all self-respect and self-dependence, but it may be so rendered as to drive idleness and despondency and self-depreciation away. Many are fast in the slough of despair, and many are being sucked down into the whirlpool of despair, and many are being paralyzed from head to foot, through lack of a helping hand. The rich may help the poor, the wise may help the ignorant, the strong may help the weak, and those who have time to spare may help such as have no leisure.

4. You may heal by your purse. Solomon saith, " Money is a defence."³ " Money answereth all things."⁴ In the broad work of healing, money is a mighty agent. Without doubt, in some cases alms-giving spreads and confirms moral disease and spiritual sickness. But as buying bread for the hungry and clothes for the naked and medicine for the sick, as procuring dwellings for the homeless, and as relieving the fatherless and the widow, as redeeming from debt those who are under pecuniary obligations to others, money does much in the service of healing.

5. You may heal by your presence. " Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the

¹ Psalm xlii. 11. ² Prov. xxvii. 17. ³ Eccles. vii. 12. ⁴ Eccles. x. 19.

day. Herein is rest; for though it be employment, it is change of occupation, and there is rest in change. Herein is enjoyment, purer, sweeter than any pleasure sought directly and for its own sake. Herein is that which is most in harmony with the spirit of the Sabbath. He sanctifies the Sabbath who on that day goes about doing good.

Heal in the time to heal. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." There is "a time to heal."¹ There is a time to speak to others, to help others, to give to others, and a time to perform every work of healing. We may in works of healing be before the time or after the time. As snow in harvest, so are ministrations out of season. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men."²

Have all the gifts of healing? All are not great doctors, but all may be great healers. All are not workers of miracles, but all may be great healers. The works of spiritual healing which may be wrought are greater works than the material miracles of Jesus Christ. It is a greater work to open the eyes of the understanding to spiritual truth than to give sight to the blind. It is a greater work to cause men to listen to the voice of God than to unstop the deaf ear. It is a greater work to arouse men to praise God than to loose the dumb tongue. It is a greater work to lead men to the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness than to cleanse from leprosy. It is a greater work to quicken and animate the moral and religious parts of human nature than to raise the dead. It is a greater work to minister to a soul diseased than to minister to sick bodies. Now this power of spiritual ministry all Christians possess. I do not say that the use of this healing power is always easy and pleasant. I could not say this in view of him, "who his own self bare our sins

¹ Eccles. iii. 1, 3.

² Gal. vi. 10.

in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."¹ The son of God "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,"² that he might heal us. And to be great healers we must be great sufferers. But the end, when secured, more than compensates for all the hardships and sorrows of the way. It is worth while to be wounded, if thereby we can bind up a broken heart. And it may encourage us to use this power, if we remember that, in all honest endeavours to heal, the power of the Lord is present to supplement and to crown our own efforts. Hence such language as this, "I heal."³ "I am the Lord that healeth thee."⁴ Be workers together with God in this work of healing. Be followers of God in this work of healing, as dear children; and may diseased minds and wounded spirits healed, be now our hope and joy, and be our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.

¹ 1 Peter ii. 24. ² Phil. ii. 8. ³ Deut. xxxii. 39. ⁴ Exodus xv. 26.

XIV

CHRIST WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM.

*"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it."
LUKE xix. 41.*

THE same objects are very different to different eyes, I mean to the eyes of different men. According to that which a man is, well-informed or ignorant, discerning or without insight, pure or defiled, benevolent or malevolent, clean or polluted in heart, educated or undeveloped, religious or ungodly, will be the appearance and qualities of the objects which he beholds.

"O Lady ! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does nature live :
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud !
* * * * *

Ah ! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth.
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element !"

That which is itself one and immutable will be wondrously varied in its manifestations to different creatures, or to individuals of diverse attainments and attributes in the same race. God sees everything as it is, we see all things as we are able to behold them, see that which our eyes can see :

* * * "But we that are not all,
As parts, can see but parts, now this, now that,
And live, perforce from thought to thought, and make
One act a phantom of succession." * *

That which Jesus Christ said of hearing may be said of seeing also, He that hath eyes to see let him see. The text presents Jesus Christ as beholding Jerusalem. He would see it with his own eyes.

A city is a great object to behold. In the smallest city there will be much people. One human being, man, woman, or child, is, when seen by the true light, a great sight. The body so wondrously made; the soul, with its self-consciousness expressing itself in the signs and sounds, "I" and "Me;" the spirit, with its God-consciousness revealing itself in morality and religion; the life, a breath which God alone can give, and which he alone can lawfully take away; the "tripartite" nature, with sympathies and affinities and capacities reaching to the heavens, embracing the material and the spiritual, the social and the religious, the terrestrial and the celestial, the divine and the human;—all this, seen in light from the true light, is a grand spectacle. And in a city we have thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of mankind.

In the most diminutive city there will be much sorrow. There will be pangs of childbirth, pains of dying, disease, bodily injury, prolonged hunger, thirst, and many other ills to which flesh is heir. There will be the sorrow of the widow and widower, of the motherless and fatherless, of parents bereaved of children, and of many others whom death has caused to mourn. There will be poverty and loss of property, depression of trade and scarcity of employment. Has any city under heaven ever been free from oppression and persecution and injustice and wrong? There will

be imbecility and lunacy and melancholy and frenzy, and other ills to which the human mind and soul are heirs. There will be sorrows known to the one sad heart, and sorrows haunting the home, and sorrows flowing from the judgment-seat and throne. Could we see a city as God sees it, with all partition-walls removed, we should see a multitude writhing together in pain. Could we hear the cries of a city as God hears them, we should hear a multitude groaning together. Distance, material enclosures and social exclusiveness, permit only a small portion of the sights and sounds of a city to be seen and heard. It is well to remember the limit to our vision and hearing. Then we shall know that in a little city there is much sorrow.

And much sin.—Drunkenness, gluttony, lust, sensuality, lying, dishonesty, extortion, excess, envy, malice; in one word, ungodliness, hydra-headed and hydra-bodied, abounds. To the sins of a city we are as an insect on one leaf of a tree. The insect sees its one leaf, the gardener sees all the leaves. Thus we see the sins of our street, court, lane, walk, or district, and have a very imperfect impression of the whole. Could we see all who at any particular time are intoxicated, all who are committing adultery, all who are stealing, and could we see these and all other immoralities when and as they are committed, what an awful impression should we have of the immorality of a city! But immorality is not the worst kind of sin. Spiritual wickedness is sin of the most heinous and dangerous type, and sometimes where there is least immorality there is most spiritual wickedness. Certainly sin abounds as men congregate and associate.

In every city there will be means and opportunities of good and of evil. The diligent may work, and the idle

may evade labour. The wicked may hide himself, and the righteous may shine forth as a light. The tempter may find victims, and the good man may gather disciples. The benevolent may relieve distress, and the malevolent may see misery and spread misery to his heart's horrid content. The man of social disposition may find friends, and the lover of solitude may be alone. The man of sympathy may throw out the tendrils of his fellow-feeling on every side of his nature, and the recluse may abide undisturbed in his own shell. Strong men may make their presence felt, and weak men may escape contempt of their weakness. Large ideas may find embodiment, and small notions may have the small encouragement they require.

A city is a growth, it has a history. It is an isthmus connecting the present with the past and the future, connecting living men with departed men and men unborn, modern structures with edifices of ancient date and buildings of future foundation. Some cities are born almost in a day, and others are the children of centuries, but whether a city be a cedar or a willow, an oak or a fir-tree, time has been required for its development. "He beheld the city."

There is much to be seen in every city, and according to the beholder will be the objects visible. The antiquarian will see the antiquities. The humane will look upon the people. The philanthropist will see the want and wretchedness. The politician will be interested in the institutions. The man of taste will find out all works of art. But few will see all that is visible to human sight in a city. And are there not some who, seeing, will nevertheless see nothing, nothing distinctly, nothing wholly, nothing with discernment and discrimination, nothing with the eyes of the understanding and the heart? "He beheld the city, and wept over it."

The force and beauty of a narrative are sometimes concealed by ignorance of the locality in which the recorded events occurred. Certainly the incident before us is, to say the least, pointed—freshened, may I say?—by an idea of the place. Jesus has been to Jericho, twenty miles north-east of Jerusalem. He is coming to the Holy City for the last time. He is crossing Olivet by the middle peak, and is on the descent of the mountain. From this position the temple and the city are perfectly seen. He beheld the city from a spot most favourable to the view. He saw the mountains round about and underneath Jerusalem. He saw all the buildings, with the city walls and the chief of the city gates. Above all he saw the temple, his Father's house, the chosen tabernacle of the Most High. He beheld and wept. Beautiful for situation was the city, but he beheld and wept. Most ancient and divine in historic association was the city, but he beheld and wept. Rich in antiquarian wealth was the city, but he beheld and wept. Magnificent in its architecture was the city, but he beheld and wept. Not desolate, but full of inhabitants was the city, but he beheld and wept. The city was called "the City of God," but he beheld and wept. His companions were rejoicing, but Jesus wept. Did he weep because there he had been despised and rejected of men? because there he knew he would be betrayed, twice tried, condemned, scourged and crucified? The fountain of these tears is revealed by the words, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because

thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”¹ He beheld the city. He saw the future as well as the present and the past. He saw the city besieged and utterly destroyed. He saw the people scattered and peeled. He saw all this as judgment from God, and he wept over the city.

Tears, looked at materially, admit a very ready explanation; they are secreted by a gland, they are drawn from the fluids of the body, and are rounded and brought down by the law of gravitation. The poets give the spiritual meaning, when they call tears the blood of the wounds of the soul, the leaves of the plant of sorrow, the hail and rain of life's winter, the safety-valves of the heart under pressure, the vent of anguish-showers blown up by the tempests of the soul. If God had a body he would weep. God does grieve, and if he had a corporeal nature, tears would not be inconsistent with all the recognised attributes of Deity. There is an eloquence in tears which is irresistible. There is a sacredness in tears which almost forbids the discussion of weeping. There is a dignity in tears which makes them consistent with the utmost intelligence and strength and nobility of character. There are men with hard heads, cold hearts, good digestion, and full purses, who know nothing of tears; but he who values true manhood and spiritual riches will not envy such men. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”²

He, the Word made flesh, the wonderful counsellor, the mighty to save, the Son of God, God manifest in flesh, “beheld the city, and wept over it.”

1. Jesus wept as a man, as the man Christ Jesus, as the perfect man Christ Jesus. “Behold the man.” In the constitution or nature of him who is before us there is complete humanity, body, soul, and spirit; body, with all its

¹ Luke xix. 42-44.

² Matt. v. 4.

parts and members and senses, soul, with all its ordinary consciousness, and spirit, with all its sympathies and affinities. The body, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin, had in it the ordinary provision for tears. The heart, undefiled by sin, had susceptibilities which, aroused, would express themselves in weeping. Would not a tearless Christ have been an imperfect Christ? There are but two occasions on which Christ is *said* to have wept—the occasion before us, and at the grave of Lazarus. But who, in a right mind, thinks of these as solitary instances? The tears at the grave of Lazarus certainly suggest that weeping was not an uncommon condition in the experience of the Son of Man. And if we are taught by the evangelist John that, beside the things recorded, “there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, the world could not contain the books that should be written,”¹ we may surely infer that in addition to unrecorded teachings and miracles and ministrations, there are unrecorded instances of weeping, even in the presence of those who observed his tears. Many and bitter were the tears which, perhaps from his earliest childhood, Jesus shed. As a sensitive and compassionate man he regretted the sorrows already in the city, and his sadness deepened into anguish, as he considered the city’s destiny and doom. As a pure and holy man he mourned bitterly over the sins of the city, and the distress of his soul was in the degree of his purity and righteousness. He was more bitterly vexed than Lot. He was more deeply grieved than Abraham. To the utmost extent of human sadness was Jesus grieved, when “he beheld the city, and wept over it.”

2. Jesus wept as a Jew. The broadest love may be

¹ John xxi. 25.

discriminating, and may include strong individual attachments. Jesus was interested in every land and in every race. No land or race was shut out from his heart. But there were special attachments to Palestine, and strong ties to the holy city. He did not weep because Jerusalem was not everlasting, and that Palestine was not for ever. He knew that the sun by whose beams the land had been made to flow with milk and honey, would one day seek this globe and not find it; he knew that the sea whose proud waters had washed Palestine's western lands would one day be no more; he knew that the mountains which were round about Jerusalem must depart and be removed; he knew that the bright stars which from the beginning had shone upon the country, would one day cease to shed their lustre on the city of God and on Abraham's promised land; he knew that in the fulness of times the earth would be dissolved, and that previous to this consummation cities would rise and fall;—but he could not bear to think that while other lands were fertile, this should be as barrenness, that while other cities stood, this should be a desolation, that while other nations were continued, this people should be scattered abroad. This people, I say. For the men, women, and children, he cared more than for country and for city. They were "his own," his own race, his own flesh and blood. And if they knew only the day of their visitation, they might shine when the sun was darkened, and live gloriously when the sea was dried up, and abide when the mountains were removed, and shed a happy influence when the stars most familiar to their city had ceased to shine. He looked on our planet and loved it. "He beheld the city, and wept over it."

3. Jesus wept as a teacher. Nicodemus gave him his true character when he said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art

a teacher come from God."² He had come to bear witness to the truth and to be the truth. "My doctrine," said he, "is not mine, but his that sent me."² The truth for that day and the truth for all time was with Jesus, in Jesus. And this truth he was commissioned to declare. The spirit of the Lord God was upon him, and he was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor. In thus preaching and teaching the truth, he spake as one having authority, and yet so as to cause men to wonder at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. Still, so far as discipling men to the truth was concerned, the life of Jesus was a failure; and on this account he wept. His tears, however, did not arise from petty personal disappointment and chagrin, still less from envy and jealousy in the direction of other Rabbis. On this matter he would say, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."³ "Light had come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."⁴ And this was the condemnation. The teaching of Jesus proved, tried, and condemned many of his hearers. He was conscious of a pure heart in his teaching, and he saw the corruption of the human heart in the rejection and contempt of his instructions. He saw that the law given by Moses was becoming darkness, and he knew that the people would need new light. He saw that the shepherds of the sheep would fail in the day of danger. He saw that the leaders would be utterly at fault in the coming exigency, and his thoughts and feelings are expressed in words uttered on another occasion, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would

² John iii. 2.³ John vii. 16.³ Luke xxiii. 28.⁴ John iii. 19.

not!"¹ His tears were tears of sinless anger and holy grief and righteous blame, when "he beheld the city, and wept over it."

4. Jesus wept as a foreteller, as a prophet. He foreknew and foretold the ruin of Jerusalem. To all that Josephus has recorded as history he was a divine seer, an anointed prophet. His predictions were not the forebodings of a morbid imagination or of a soul diseased; they were not the clever calculations of a keen political observer, or the prognostications of a man with strong social insight, but they were the utterances of a divine foreknowledge, sure and certain as knowledge of the present and of the past. Hear him say, "The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." As in summer we foresee winter, and as at noon we foresee night, so did Jesus, as he beheld the city, foresee its destruction. A very different prophet from Jonah is here! Jonah was displeased exceedingly, and very angry, because Nineveh repented at his preaching, and for a time was saved. And Jonah hereby grossly and grievously misrepresented the God in whose name he prophesied. He who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, declared the mind and will and heart of God, when, beholding this doomed city, he wept over it.

5. Jesus wept as the Messiah. He was the woman's seed promised in Paradise. He was the Shiloh seen by Jacob. He was the prophet revealed to Moses. He was the prince of peace spoken of by Isaiah. To him gave all

¹ Matthew xxiii. 37.

the prophets witness. The law was his shadow. Much was written in the Psalms and prophets concerning him. His history and character, his words and works, fulfilled various scriptures written by inspired men. His claim to the Messiahship was distinct and full and clear. Yet he was despised and rejected of men. Yet when he came to his own, his own received him not. This was a sorrow for his Father's sake. He was the fulfilment of his Father's ancient and oft-repeated promise. He was his Father's unspeakable gift. What a requital of infinite and eternal love! And this was a sorrow for the people's sake. Instead of receiving him they were looking for another. But Jesus knew that their eyes would fail by looking in vain. He knew that their hearts, sick of deferred hope, would be perpetually tormented by 'Lo! here!' and 'Lo! there!' The people appeared to him as sheep without a shepherd, as sheep wandering and torn and maimed, straying on the dark mountains, none seeking to save the lost. They seemed to him like shipwrecked mariners cast on a desolate island, straining their sight in hope of discovering a sail, deceived and deceiving their companions by mistaking clouds for ships, and perishing one by one, until the last of the dead remains where he breathed out his life, unshrouded and unburied; or, to use the illustration which Jesus himself employed, they are like a brood of birds needing the shelter of the parent's wing, but exposed to every unfavourable circumstance and destructive influence. He was sent to be the Messiah unto them, and they would not; and "he beheld the city, and wept over it."

As included in our previous observation, but as deserving a distinct notice, we may remark:

6. Jesus wept as a saviour. The work of a true worker will often call forth tears. Not to do in one's mission and

occupation that which one has desired to do, aimed at, and devoted one's self to accomplish, is anguish in the heart. Tears over spoiled work are often shed, and hot and briny those tears are. The laws of nature sometimes work detrimentally and disastrously, and yet more frequently, the evil that is in man. The walls of the studio and of the library often witness the tears of the artist and of the scholar. Find me the noble work that is not more or less stained by tears, sometimes tears of blood. Ignorance spoils good work, and unwisdom, and evil principle, and passion, and bad conduct. Why God should permit good work to be marred, I cannot tell. He does allow this, even his own very good work he permits to be injured. Jesus Christ came to save his people from their sins, and they would not. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life."¹ He knew that no man can come except the Father draw him, but he did not pervert this fact to the hardening of his own heart. He looked upon those who would not be saved, and wept over them. Measure his sorrow by his knowledge and by his hatred of sin; measure his sorrow by his own freedom from sin; measure his sorrow by the love of his large heart. To see evil and to be unable to remedy it, is anguish; but to see evil, to be able and willing to remove it, and to be baffled by the wilfulness and waywardness of the sufferer or of the evil-doer, is anguish keener and deeper still. Jesus knew all this when "he beheld the city, and wept over it."

7. Jesus wept as God manifest in flesh. The God grieved and the man wept. The divine nature does suffer, and these tears reveal the fact. The whole nature of the Christ, the Redeemer of men, was sad, when Jesus on this occasion wept. The material world is very hard in the

¹ John v. 40.

direction of the sorrows of life. The sun shines on the funeral procession, and into the sick-room where light rouses the brain to frenzy. The rain falls upon the crop of hay or corn which needs sunshine, and which showers will utterly destroy. The waters of ocean or lake or river drown the husband on whose life the maintenance of a large family depends. But hard nature does not represent God. The whole God is not in nature, but the whole God is in Christ, in this Jesus who "beheld the city, and wept over it."

These tears, then, were the tears of a man, a patriot, a teacher, and a prophet. They were the tears of the Messiah and the Saviour and the God-man. They were both human and divine, tears of pity and patriotism, tears of sympathy and of displeasure, tears of a wounded spirit and of a loving soul.

Call not hardness strength. Account not insensitiveness power. Despise not tears as feminine weakness. Blot not patriotism from your list of virtues.

"Lives there a man with soul so dead
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own—my native land?"

Let not the voices of joy and praise so fill your ear as to make you deaf to the cry of sin and sadness. Listen if you will to the voices that praise the scenery of Great Britain and Ireland, that extol our colonial empire, that commend our constitution and our laws, that speak of military prowess and naval renown, that celebrate the commerce and trade and manufactures of the nation, that enumerate our artists and scholars, our philanthropists and statesmen, our inventors and discoverers, our poets and rabbis in science, that describe the rapid increase of our population, and that bring into view all that is good in the present and noble in

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the past—but listen also to the sounds of sinning and of suffering, of wretchedness and of wickedness, which in every position seek your ear. Or, bringing the form of our thought into more perfect harmony with my text, plant yourself on some Olivet, from which you can command a full and accurate view of the city, and with open eyes and a sensitive heart, behold it.

As long as the New Testament is preserved, my text shall be read and quoted and expounded, and when the sacred writings shall be no more, when this earth shall be dissolved, and Palestine and Jerusalem live only in memory, it shall be said to the honour of Jesus, the Christ, "He beheld the city, and wept over it."

* * * "Great deeds cannot die :
They with the sun and moon renew their light
For ever, blessing those that look on them."

XV

ONE SAVING NAME.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."—ACTS iv. 12.

WE can destroy ourselves, but we cannot save ourselves; we can destroy each other, but we cannot save each other. There are some dangers and some evils from which we *can* save both ourselves and our fellows, but from the worst perils and the greatest ills, we can neither save ourselves nor others. All that in this case we can do for ourselves, is to look to a Saviour, and for others, to direct them to a Redeemer. We save ourselves by submitting to be saved; we save others by promoting in them the obedience of faith.

We are seldom satisfied with that which we have; we crave, needlessly and sinfully, that which we have not. Thus Eve ate the fruit of the one forbidden tree, and the antediluvians broke down every moral fence, and Israel lusted for that which God had not provided, and for that which God had prohibited; and the generation to which Jesus Christ came, desired a saviour entirely different from him to whom the prophets had given witness, and whom God had sent to be the Saviour of the world.

To this fact Peter, in words immediately preceding the text, calls the attention of the supreme council of the Jews, and he adds, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

There are four things in this text commanding attention: Salvation, Salvation by a person, Salvation by a person whose name is divinely made known, and, Salvation limited to that person.

First, Salvation. Ignorance with respect to the highest subjects is compared in Holy Scriptures to darkness; not to darkness which is natural, but to that which is unnatural; not to that which is seasonable, but out of season; nor to that which in the economy of nature renders good service, but to that which, proceeding from an evil source, produces danger, mischief, and ruin. To be called out of darkness into marvellous light, is in part salvation.

Foolishness is ever attendant upon sinfulness. In the degree that a man trusts in his own heart and turns to his own way, he is a fool. He elects wrong objects, and follows after lawful objects by evil means. He builds houses on sand, enters upon warfare without counting the cost, calls evil good and good evil, casts away that which is most precious in exchange for that which is most vile, and acts as though bereft of reason, or deranged in his noblest faculties. To receive wisdom from above, and to be made, concerning the highest ends and the best means and methods, truly wise, is in part salvation.

The imagination is a faculty ever busy for good or for evil. Unless connected with knowledge and wisdom, its fabrications are vain and wicked. It builds palaces where there is neither prince nor king, wealth nor honour, and constructs prisons where there is neither bondage nor danger

of captivity; it sees lions in the safe way of duty, and discovers green pastures on the bleak and barren mountains of transgression; it hears the hum of bees where the snow never melts and the ice never breaks up, and listens to the howling of the winter's blast where summer always reigns; it creates the mirage on the sand and the parhelion in the mist;—and all this, where deception involves the danger of death. To have all such imaginations cast down, is in part salvation.

The heart of man is a tree bearing perpetually all manner of fruits, and it is a fountain ever pouring forth water. Now this water is bitter, and these fruits are corrupt. Desire is often lust and concupiscence, some of the affections are vile, and all are inordinate. To have created within us a clean heart and a right spirit, is in part salvation.

The will of man was created to correspond to the will of God, as a wheel within a wheel, but it has fallen from its place and revolves out of its sphere. It was intended to be plastic and pliant as the muscles of a young and healthful body, but it has become an iron sinew. Like the rudder of a ship, which keeps the vessel in the direction of her destination, although made to traverse it, the will was intended to keep men true to the glory of God while compassing the broad way of God's commandments. But the helm is in the hands of pirates, and the vessel's prow is to the rock, or the quicksand, or the iceberg. To be delivered from a rebellious and wayward will, and to be made ready to do the will of God as an obedient child, is in part salvation.

Conscience is a faculty which many suppose can never become corrupt. Hence, if a man can say that he acts conscientiously, it is supposed that he is defended from all blame. But a man may do evil when he acts conscientiously, for there are evil consciences; there is the

conscience which is seared with a hot iron, and the conscience which is defiled by erroneous moral views; the troubled conscience tormented with the smartings of its own sense of guilt, and the accusing conscience ever casting up into the thoughts and emotions the mire and dirt of manifold sins and wickedness; also the morbid conscience, which confounds weakness and wickedness, infirmity and impiety, smarting with pain when it should be free from all discomfort. To have the conscience cleansed and healed by the precious blood of Christ, and rectified by the Holy Ghost, is in part salvation.

God created man in his own image, "in the image of God created he him." As the painting or the statue to its subject, as the mirror to the spectator, so was the first man, in the beginning, to his God. But the mirror is broken, and the statue is defaced, and the painting is rent, and the child has fallen and is disfigured and maimed. To have the mirror replaced, the picture renovated, the child healed, and the divine likeness restored, is in part salvation.

With a sinful nature we are born. How it is, we know not, but so it is. Why it should be, we know not, but so it is. We do come into life with dispositions and tendencies to evil, and these inclinations bring forth fruit early and continually. To have our sinfulness crucified and its dominion destroyed, is in part salvation.

The position of man was, in his first estate, righteous and filial. He was a true and trusting and holy child of God, and was treated and recognised by heaven as a child. The earth was a mansion in the Father's house. Daily bread was the provision of parental kindness, and worship was the child's praise of his Father. There was nothing in the providence or government of God which even seemed to

¹ Genesis i. 27.

ignore the godliness of the man. But we have fallen from our position by sin, and are accounted guilty and ungodly. To be restored to the position of the righteous, to be justified, is in part salvation.

There is an evil spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, an evil spirit by whose evil will men are led captive. To be delivered from his presence and power, is in part salvation.

There is evil in all human institutions and arrangements. God's world is good, but man's has much evil. To be made to overcome the world, is in part salvation.

Death has crept over our human nature, spiritual death. To be morally and religiously quickened, is in part salvation.

Punishment hangs over our guilty heads, like a thundercloud pregnant with storm, and the impending tempest murmurs in our present sorrows, in poverty, sickness, bereavement, death, and unrest. The wages of sin is death, and all the evils to which flesh and soul are heir are as instalments of the wages of sin. To have the firmament of life cleared and cleansed of these clouds by the forgiveness of sins, is in part salvation.

Such are the derangements of evil, that the forgiven and regenerated are exposed to affliction, and it is appointed that they too should die. To be sustained in the hour of tribulation, to have death sent to us disarmed of his goad, to go down into our grave and to rise again, shouting, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"¹ is in part salvation.

Paradise was lost by Adam, but paradise is regained by Jesus Christ. To enter that garden as our own, to pluck its flowers and eat its fruits and enjoy its innumerable delights, to enter and to go no more out for ever, and to realize

* 1 Corinthians xv. 55.

therein everlasting life, this is the consummation of salvation.

To be saved from ignorance, folly, vain imaginations, an evil heart, a rebellious will, an evil conscience, a damaged character, the dominion and presence of sin, the position of the guilty, and from the punishment of evil-doers; to be sustained in this life's sorrows and to have them sanctified, to be able to triumph over death and the grave; to be forgiven and restored, regenerated and sanctified; to escape perdition and to inherit heaven—is, so far as words can reveal it, the whole of salvation. This God promised at the beginning, this God has provided, and this we offer you in the preaching of the Gospel.

Salvation! it is God's grand scheme for the deliverance of men from all evil. Salvation! this is God's chief work, although he be creator and ruler of all. Salvation! this is the only thing man cannot do without. Salvation! this is the great necessity of man. Salvation! this consummated, leaves him nothing to regret and nothing to long for.

Where, oh! where, is this salvation? See it, *secondly*, in a person.

Deliverances are sometimes wrought by things as distinguished from persons. The shipwrecked one is saved by clinging to a floating spar, the child who has fallen into a lake is saved by seizing the bough of a tree growing upon the margin, the tenant of a house on fire is saved by the trap-door in the roof. And deliverances are effected by things employed by persons, as by a crew in a life-boat, a fireman and the fire-escape, a physician and the medicines he prescribes. There are, moreover, persons whose profession is some work of salvation, as the medical practitioner, the fireman, and the life-boat crew.

The salvation of which we have been speaking is not in

the divine purpose, it is not in the divine fiat, it is not in any thing, but in a living Saviour.

To be saved by a Saviour. This shows our weakness, and in our weakness we see our wretchedness. The evil which afflicts us is such that we require a personal Redeemer. We are like one drowning, bound hand and foot. We are like one exposed to the flames, and paralyzed in every limb. We are like one poisoned, upon whom the sleep of death is already creeping.

This arrangement removes all cause of boasting from the saved. The saved may rejoice, triumph, sing for gladness, shout aloud for joy, talk of the salvation and of the Saviour, but boasting is excluded. This arrangement places the redeemed under special obligations. They are indebted to their Saviour as to none other. There are none upon earth to be compared to him. Father, mother, husband, wife, have done nothing for us compared with him who saves us. This arrangement renders the actual work of salvation a service of sympathy and love. Salvation comes not from a mere power or force, but it is connected with intelligence, affection, and volition, and is therefore not liable to failure. And it creates a new relation and connexion. By our existence we become the offspring of God. By our entrance into life we have parents of the flesh. And these and other connexions are natural. We have Creator, mother, father, perhaps brothers, sisters, in the ordinary course of providence. But a Saviour is distinct from all other relations. Blessed is the man who, looking toward one mighty to save, can say of that mighty one, "My Saviour." A man may be an orphan, and brotherless and sisterless and friendless, and, with a Saviour, anything but desolate, while he who, in the midst of the largest and most loving circle, has no Redeemer, is not only a forlorn man, he is for the time a lost man.

But who is this personal Saviour? His name is given among men. *Thirdly*, look at salvation in a person made known.

Six thousand years ago the Saviour of men was simply called the Seed of the Woman. Then he was denominated the Shiloh, the Prophet, Wonderful, Root of Jesse, Righteous Branch, Jehovah our Righteousness. And the angel who announced the conception said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."¹

Jesus is the name given among men as the name of the Saviour. To this Jesus give all the prophets witness as the Christ of God. This Jesus was proclaimed Saviour by the angel Gabriel, by another angel, and by a multitude of the heavenly host. This Jesus was introduced by one of the greatest prophets the earth has ever known. The works he wrought bare witness of him. The heavens were thrice rent, and from the excellent glory a voice came, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."² Eclipse and earthquake saluted him as the Saviour of the world when he died; resurrection revived his renown, and ascension established it for ever and ever, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."³

It is an interesting fact, that the name Jesus occurs nearly seven hundred times in the four Gospels, Christ alone some sixty times in the Gospels and in the Acts, Jesus Christ but five times in the Gospels, and Christ Jesus not once in those books. Jesus in the Gospels occurs in the proportion of fourteen to one to Christ. We may regard Jesus as therefore the name given among men.

Joshua, to which name Jesus corresponds, is composed of a portion of the name Jehovah, and of a word which signifies salvation. So that the etymon would signify, the

¹ Matt. i. 21.

² Matt. iii. 17.

³ Phil. ii. 10.

Lord's salvation, or Lord of salvation. This name was given to the son of Nun, to a Bethshemite in the time of Samuel, to a governor among the cities of Judah in the days of Josiah, and to a high priest in the days of Haggai. The name, though in use, was not common, and it was given the Son of Mary with a special signification.

But who is this Jesus? He is God. He is God manifest. He is man, not mere man, but God and man—God manifest in flesh. He has all the attributes and properties of God, but while on earth he "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."¹ He has all the attributes and properties of humanity, but without sin. So that we may call him "the God Jesus," "the man Jesus," "Jesus Immanuel," "Jesus the Omniscient," "the Almighty," "the Only Wise," "The Holy, Holy, Holy," "the Son of God," "one with the Father," "Jesus Christ," and "Jesus Christ our Lord." And in him is salvation. In him is the power and riches and wisdom and strength. In him is all that is requisite for complete redemption; and his name is given among men. God has given this name, given it in writing to be read, given it by preaching to be heard, given it himself that it may never be forgotten, and that it may be above every name, given it among men, that men may read and hear it, learn and repeat it, incorporate it with their prayers and their songs, and that it may become as familiar in their mouths as any household word, as the words mother and father.

We will look, *fourthly*, at the fact that the dispensation of salvation is limited to this person.

There have been other names under heaven given among men. The Pharisees gave the name of Abraham, and said,

¹ Philipians ii. 7.

“We have Abraham for our father,”¹ and the name of Moses, saying, “We are Moses’ disciples.”² The false prophet of the sixth century gave his own name. The Church of Rome gives the name of the Holy Catholic Church, the names of angels, saints and martyrs, and above all, the name of Mary, the mother of our Lord. But Abraham was the ancestor of the Saviour, not the Saviour; Moses was a prophet of the Saviour, not the Saviour; Mahomet was self-deceived and a deceiver; the church is composed of the saved, not of saviours; the angels minister to the heirs of salvation, they cannot save them; and Mary is indebted for her own salvation to her own son Jesus.

But not only have other names been put forward, but things have been presented as saviours. Thus, sacraments are given among men as means of salvation, and men-made creeds, and membership with particular churches, and good works. But these are given among men by men, and not by God.

It would be interesting to inquire into the causes of other names and of things being put forward. Perhaps the chief cause is pride. We shrink from the practical acknowledgment of entire and absolute dependence upon the grace of God for our redemption; we despise the simplicity of faith, or we are not prepared to follow after holiness. But, however this may be, “neither is there salvation in any other.”

There may be much mystery surrounding this name,—nay, there *is* mystery—the mystery of the holy incarnation, the mystery of the union of the divine and human natures, the mystery of oneness with the Father co-existing with subjection to the Father, the mystery of the temptation and agony, and of the “Eloi, Eloi,” the mystery of the grave

¹ Matthew iii. 9.

² John ix. 28.

and resurrection and ascension; but we cannot afford to put aside or to neglect the name Jesus because of the mystery which surrounds it, because "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

There are differences of opinion concerning him who bears this name Jesus. Some deny his deity, and others deny his true humanity. Some refuse to recognise him as a victim sacrificial and a priest, and do him homage only as a teacher; others leave him in the sepulchre among all the mighty dead. The unbelieving Jew still accounts him an impostor, the believing Gentile crowns him Lord of all. But amidst this diversity of opinion we may not say, "I suspend my judgment." We must on this subject make up our minds. Nor can we hold error without fearful peril, for "neither is there salvation in any other."

Many who say they are saved by Christ show no signs of redemption. As we look at them we say, "Saved, saved from what?" If they be saved, what must they have been before? how much worse than hell's lowest devils? If they be saved, why has the work left that deplorable ignorance, and that childish folly, and that evil imagination, and those corrupt affections, and that hard heart, and that rebel will, and that seared conscience, and that hateful pride, and that wicked eye, and that hell-fired tongue, and that gluttonous and winebibbing appetite, and that despicable character, and that wicked conduct, and that influence to spread wickedness and wretchedness—all untouched. There are men who boast that they are saved, who are such children of hell and of the devil, that many have said, "If this be salvation, may heaven keep it far from me!" But what then? Although many who say they are saved exhibit no signs of salvation—yea, more, although but few be saved—yea, more,

if as yet not one soul has been saved, my text abides true, "Neither is there salvation in any other."

Many men think their own cases too singular to be saved by Christ Jesus. One man is sceptical, and his doubtings and questionings are, in his judgment, of the most extraordinary character. There have been sceptics many, but none like himself. A second was once an atheist or a deist, and in the denial of religious truth proceeded farther than he can conceive it possible for an infidel to go. A third has been a blasphemer. He has blasphemed both the Father and the Son, especially the Son; horrible blasphemies have proceeded from his unclean lips. A fourth has been a licentious profligate. Drunkenness and debauchery of every kind have been habits from his youth up. A fifth has been more cruel than a beast of prey in every relation of life; he broke his mother's heart, he brought down his father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; he exhausted the patience of brothers and sisters and the kindness of early friends; he has forsaken the wife of his youth, and has left his children worse than fatherless. A sixth once wore the form of godliness while destitute of the power, and a beautiful and attractive form it was; it deceived the Christian pastor, it misled the church of God, old men praised it, little children revered it, but it became worn out, and is now a bundle of filthy rags. A seventh once heard the word with joy, but endured only for a while; tribulation arose and he was offended. The eighth has been a bitter persecutor.

Now, each of these say, Jesus may save others, but he cannot save me. I am the chief of backsliders. I am the chief of hypocrites. I am the chief of man-slayers. I am the chief of profligates. I am the chief of blasphemers. I am the chief of infidels. I am the chief of sceptics. I am

the chief of persecutors. But whatever eminence a man may have in that which is sinful, and whatever prominence among the multitude of evil-doers, if he be saved at all, he must be saved by the Redeemer of the infant and the Saviour of the least of sinners.

There is one sun to rule our day, and not another; one moon to rule our night, and not another; one atmosphere around our globe in which to breathe and move, and not another. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

And are there any persons here—men, women, children, young men, maidens—who believe not on our Lord Jesus Christ? If there be, who can they be? Surely not the children of believing parents? Not those who are now, or who have been, scholars in our Christian schools? Not the possessors of a New Testament? Not those who regularly or even occasionally hear the gospel? Not such as know this name Jesus? Or is it so, that the unbelievers here consist of these very classes?

My brothers, not believe! Why do you not believe? This name, by faith in this name, saves. The ignorant by faith come to this Jesus as a teacher; the unwise by faith come to this Jesus as wisdom's fountain; the foolish builders by faith come to earth's Creator; the impure by faith come to this Jesus, as to a fountain opened for sin and all uncleanness; the prodigal son comes by faith to this Jesus as an elder brother, to mediate with the Father; the conscience-wounded creature comes by faith to this physician of souls, that he may make him whole; the fallen come by faith to this Jesus, mighty to save, that he may lift them up; and if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be saved.

My brothers, believe. Do I hear you say, "Go thy way

for this time"?¹ For this time! Why for this time? Ah, I know why—that you may drink more freely of this world's pleasures. One word about this world's pleasures—

"Earth's cup is poisoned."

Cast from your hand the poisoned cup, and take from the hand of Christ's servant the cup of salvation. Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord.

Brethren, believers in this name, let me exhort and encourage you to do your utmost to make it known. When you see it, does it not sparkle beneath your eye as the gem of gems? When you hear it, does it not sound as heaven's sweetest music in your ear? and in your heart of hearts, do you not feel it to be the power of God to your salvation? Then do your best to sustain the men by whom, and to uphold the places in which, this name of names is preached.

¹ Acts xxiv. 25.

XVI

“THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST.”

“The precious blood of Christ.”—I PETER i. 19.

THE entrance of sin into our world, and its previous existence in another province of the spiritual creation, will certainly produce astonishment in all thoughtful men, so long as we are tenants of this lower sphere, and will perhaps occasion wonder in the brighter realms of the blest. That beings, created in righteousness and true holiness, should fall from this high estate and become depraved, that members of two distinct races should fall in succession, that the first apostate should tempt and seduce the new-born children of God on this earth, and this in the bright morning of their life; that the first temptation should be successful, and that by one man's disobedience many should have been made sinners, is without doubt an awful mystery. And that Jehovah the Good, the Only Wise, the Almighty, that the God who is light without darkness, and love without change, should foresee and foreknow the birth and growth of evil, and that he should permit and decree to permit all that sin involves, is a mystery which, we confess, would madden us, had we not faith in God, and had we not firmly resolved to leave the origin of evil uninvestigated, until some

direct beams of the eternal light, shining upon this dark point of creation's history, shall attract us to the subject, in hope of acquiring certain knowledge of that which is now too wonderful for us. The mysteries of sin do not, however, render it less evil or bitter, nor should they retard our application to that which can alone cleanse us from our sins. 'That which can alone cleanse us from our sins'—did I say? and what is that? The Apostle Peter tells us it is the precious blood of Christ, concerning the preciousness of which we would preach to you on this occasion. The blood of Jesus Christ is precious, 1st, as a remedy for sin; 2nd, as the practical solution of an important problem in the divine government; 3rd, as the blood of the Son of God; 4th, as the highest manifestation of disinterested love; 5th, as serving us not in one important matter merely, but variously; 6th, as combining beauty, utility, and rarity; 7th, as incorruptible; 8th, as the balm for the worst wounds of human nature.

Suffer a few remarks upon each of these points.

1. Worlds in which there is no evil and no danger of evil arising, would not be supplied with means of prevention or of cure; but in our planet we have specifics, remedies, antidotes, and palliatives, for almost all the ills which flesh is heir to, and there are laws of compensation, which show that the God of love does not impose want and destitution willingly. Here, then, where even the juice of the sea-wort is a cordial, and "its ashes feed the spark of life," where the nightshade stops the painful vibration of the nerves, and brings sweet sleep upon eyelids which have become stiff in unseasonable wakefulness; here, where the thorn protects the flower, and the thistle feeds the hungry beast, where crowding insects cleanse and scavenge our earth and her firmament, and where everything has its use; here, where

"secret griefs are lessened by unseen joys," and "thorns in the flesh endured by cordials in the spirit;"—here we have for the removal of sin the precious blood of Christ.

2. A ruler who never punishes his rebellious subjects, and who so pardons as to reproach his own government and laws, will spread evil by his so-called goodness, and will be cruel in his apparent kindness. Assuming a government to be righteous, and assuming its commandments to be holy, just, and good, all transgression must be visited with the rod, or so forgiven as to vindicate the broken law and maintain the position and the authority of the ruler, thereby condemning the sin while saving the sinner. The parent who gives commands to his children, sees them disobey, and takes no notice of their disobedience, or, threatening, always fails to punish, will soon be in the position of a slave to his offspring. The master who gives orders, but cares not to have them executed, will soon find his servants riding upon horses and himself walking as their attendant by their side. The pastor who allows every man in the church to do that which is right in his own eyes, will soon find that his "charge" is not a church of Christ, but a congregation of evil-doers. The monarch who bends to every strong faction, will soon find himself broken on the wheel of revolution. Society is impossible without government, and no government can continue which does not maintain and vindicate its laws.

Now sin having entered our world, God must either punish and destroy, or pardon and save. If he punish and destroy, a race is ruined in whose creation and life he has taken special delight, and in their ruin an enemy of God achieves a signal triumph. But if he pardon and save, without some special provision for the dispensation of pardon, will he not acknowledge his creative work to have

been imperfect, and his covenant of life unwise, and his commandment unholy, and the penal sanction of his law unjust, and will he not seem to say that sin is not an evil and a bitter thing? The problem to be solved is, How can God be just, and yet the Saviour of the sinner? The solution of this problem is found in the precious blood of Christ.

3. Christ, according to the Scriptures, is the Word made flesh. The Logos was in the beginning, was with God, and in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. The Logos was God, not God the Father, nor God the Spirit, but God the Son. What the relation of the Son is to the Father and to the Spirit we do not fully know. All we know is, that the Logos is neither the Father nor the Spirit, but that still the Logos is God. Jesus Christ is the Logos made flesh, made in the likeness of men. Christ is God manifest in flesh, and the blood of Christ is the blood of the flesh in which God was manifest. Never was flesh like this, conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, born of a virgin, undefiled and holy, sinless even from the beginning, and never employed as an instrument of unrighteousness. All blood is precious,—precious the blood of Abel, and precious the blood of the persecuted prophets, precious the blood of the noble army of martyrs, precious in God's sight is the blood of all his saints, and precious the blood of every man, and indeed of every living thing; but there is no blood so precious as the precious blood of Christ.

4. Among the many things which we value, there is nothing which we so prize as the offerings of disinterested love: these surpass in interest, if not in value, the products of our labour and the blessings which we inherit as a birthright, or which reach us through the ordinary channels

of divine providence, and of our political and social institutions. Now "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."¹ The laying down of life for another, I do not say for a creed, is certainly evidence of disinterested love. There are many things which a man may lay at my feet in selfishness, and not in love. He may place money at my disposal that he may hold me captive by golden chains, and drive me hither and thither as by a silver bit and a gilded bridle. He may place his time and energies at my disposal, with the view of supplanting me in my own position, or of making himself conspicuous in my own appointed sphere. But if he lay down his life for me, life above all things precious, he must love me with an outloving love. And the blood of such an one would be precious to me, not only as serving me, perhaps saving my blood, and as manifesting love, but as being the highest expression of kindness which could be given me. Now concerning himself the Saviour saith, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."² "I lay down my life for the sheep."³ And because Christ offered himself without spot to God, the Apostle Peter calls the blood of this oblation, the precious blood of Christ. The blood of Christ is a double illustration of disinterested love, for while the Son of God gives himself for us, the Father gives the Son to be the Saviour of the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."⁴ "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."⁵ "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."⁶ Had the blood

¹ John xv. 13. ² John x. 11. ³ John x. 15. ⁴ John iii. 16. ⁵ Rom. v. 8. ⁶ 1 John iv. 16.

of Christ, as some erroneously represent, appeased the divine anger, quenched the divine wrath, and awakened the divine mercy, it would have been precious blood; but as expressing and revealing the exceeding riches of God's grace, how unspeakably more precious is the precious blood of Christ!

5. Is it too much to say that all creation serves us? Certainly all of creation that is tangible and accessible and influential upon our world and visible, more or less serves us, and the services are almost infinite in number and in variety. The ministrations to us of some beings and of some things are incessant, and the benefits they impart are lasting as life; and not among the things which serve us casually and temporarily, but among those which serve us fully and permanently and variously, do we place the precious blood of Christ. Hear what God himself saith: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."¹ "Being justified by his blood."² "We have redemption through his blood."³ "Ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."⁴ "And having made peace through the blood of his cross."⁵ "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."⁶ "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus."⁷ "The blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."⁸ "The blood of the everlasting covenant."⁹ "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."¹⁰ "Unto

¹ Rom. iii. 24-26. ² Rom. v. 9. ³ Ephes. i. 7. ⁴ Ephes. ii. 13. ⁵ Colos. i. 20.
⁶ Heb. ix. 12. ⁷ Heb. x. 19. ⁸ Heb. xii. 24. ⁹ Heb. xiii. 20. ¹⁰ 1 John i. 7.

him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."¹ "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."² "And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb."³ How marvellous in their variety and character are the effects of the blood of Christ! The blood of Christ opens the hand of the supreme ruler, closed not through lack of love, but by the just rigours of his broken laws; it unveils the throne of the Holy, Holy, Holy, a throne shrouded to sinful eyes. It brings Jehovah forth from his secret place with the light of love in his countenance, it arrests the course of the law in its pursuit of the sinner, it magnifies the law, it restores access to God, it cleanses, justifies, and redeems unto God. Never was blood like this. Blood shed on the battle-field has quenched the fires of international strife, and broken the rod of the oppressor, and set captives free, and advanced liberty, and promoted civilization. Blood shed in civil strife has sometimes—but how seldom!—advanced the freedom and prosperity of a people, and the blood of the martyrs is said to be the seed of the church; but as the heavens are high above the earth, so far above the blood spilt by heroes and patriots and martyrs is the precious blood of Christ.

6. There are different standards by which we value precious things. Some things are valuable because of their utility, and other things because of their singularity and rarity and beauty, but how few things are beautiful and rare and useful! Precious stones are beautiful and rare, but their utility is small; and the precious metals are valuable as currency, but not comparable to iron or even to coal. When, however, rarity is combined with utility, and an important service is to be rendered by one being or by one thing, how precious that being or thing becomes! The one

¹ Rev. i. 5.² Rev. v. 9.³ Rev. xii. 11.

medicine, a specific for some dire disease, the one means of escape in the hour of peril, the forlorn hope of an army, the only son of a widowed mother, are examples. And in this position stands the blood of Christ. Men have tried to remove the sin of the soul by offerings of wine and oil and blood of beasts; they have sacrificed their firstborn for their transgression, and the fruit of their body for their iniquity; they have fasted and prayed and done penance, wrought and suffered and striven; but the scarlet stains remain in the character, and the crimson dye is suffused over the soul. Nor is there any position in which these stains of sin are invisible. Everywhere, in the place of private prayer and in the house of public devotion, before the face of Almighty God and in the presence of all his people, everywhere these blood-like stains show themselves,—show themselves though there be washing with nitre and with much soap, and the transgressor cries, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?”¹ The punishment of Tantalus is the doom of those who try to wash away their sins by other means than the precious blood of Christ. “I saw,” says Homer’s Ulysses, “the severe punishment of Tantalus. In a lake, whose waters approached to his lips, he stood burning with thirst, without the power to drink. Whenever he inclined his head to the stream, some deity commanded it to be dry, and the dark earth appeared at his feet. Around him lofty trees spread their fruits to view; the pear, the pomegranate and the apple, the green olive and the luscious fig quivered before him, which, whenever he extended his hand to seize them, were snatched by the winds into clouds and obscurity.” Thus tormented are the men who seek forgiveness through their own works and deservings and offerings; but those who look for redemption

¹ Jeremiah xiii. 23.

through Christ's blood find it as readily and surely as they find water who go to fetch it from an open and everflowing fountain. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."¹ The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, but the blood of Christ alone. More singular therefore in its position and properties and effects than the oasis in the desert (for there are many oases and many deserts), more singular than the loftiest Alp or than the highest peak of Himalaya (for these mountains have compeers only a little lower than themselves), more singular than the centre of our solar system (for in the material universe there are many suns), is the precious, most precious, eternally precious blood of Christ.

7. Alas! many of our precious things deteriorate. Time, that devours all things, mars and breaks our choicest treasures. How few are the objects which do not bear the mark of his sharp teeth! The garments we lay by are moth-eaten. The gold and silver which men hoard become rusty and cankered. The riches which men deposit, more carefully than birds their eggs in the well-built nest, take wings and fly away. The vines we have tended with so much care are spoiled by foxes. Health fails, and in its place comes dangerous or chronic sickness. Strength subsides into settled weakness. Our very blood becomes impoverished and impure, and loses its vitality. The children of our warm affections are missed from their places, like arrows shot from quivers. Business fails, trade declines, commerce is arrested, empires decline and fall, the very church of Christ becomes corrupt; but among the things which are incorruptible and undefiled and which cannot fade away, is the precious blood of Christ.

¹ Isaiah i. 18.

8. Often have we heard men say, 'Lo! here is the panacea, and lo! there!' But where is the remedy for all disease, and where the universal medicine? It saith little for medical science that the disease which is England's scourge, which cuts down her fairest and sweetest flowers, and which fells her tallest trees, is still acknowledged to be incurable. The art of healing has yet to be learned by the physicians, and it may be that the microscope is to be the teacher.

Our great calamity is not, however, poverty or sickness or death, but sin. Sin which has entered our world is our great foe. While sin remains our deadly foes are legion; but sin taken away, the last enemy is soon destroyed. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. It blots sin out of the book of God's remembrance; it takes the commission to punish from the hand of sin's avengers; it silences the voice of guilt, as guilt calls for vengeance; it clears life's firmament of clouds; it changes earth's thorns into fir-trees, and her briars into myrtle-trees, and converts the wilderness into a fruitful field. It removes the guilty smart from the conscience, and it relieves memory of its heaviest burden, and takes from imagination all its horrible creations. It allays fear, it purges the affections from the love of evil, it inclines the will to holiness, it takes out sin's stains from the character, and tends to make the robe of our daily conduct white as snow. It restores a godly character, and elevates to a righteous standing, and all this unto all and upon all them that believe. The blood of Christ cleanses the child and the hoary-headed sinner, the weak-minded and the strong, the chief of sinners and the least of sinners, the tenants of our city's slums and the occupants of England's mansions, the polished European and the rude and untrained Hottentot, the simple Laplander and the subtle Hindoo,

the man-eating South Sea Islander and the civilized Chinese. It cleanses all from all sin. Let the blood of Christ have free course, and it will take sin from the home, and from the market, and from the factory, and from the shop, and from the workroom, and from the place of the receipt of custom, and from the field, and from the farm, and from the halls of science, and from the high places of literature, and from the judgment-seat, and from the throne. How precious is this blood of Christ! Precious to heaven, for it is heaven's most costly gift. Precious to Christ, for it is the offering of himself; and precious to us, for its worth appears in a work which no other agency can perform, and which is essential to our eternal life. Precious to our thoughts, for it is the theme of themes, full of God and full of man; and precious to our hearts, for trust and love and hope and joy find in it the elixir of their life. And it is precious in our hands, to carry as a balm to our wounded, wretched, wandering, dying fellow-men; for one thing applied never fails to make the wounded sinner whole,—I mean the precious, most precious, eternally precious blood of Christ.

XVII

THE SOUL'S THIRST SATISFIED IN JESUS.

Preached in Exeter Hall, July 29th, 1849.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."—JOHN vii. 37.

THE feast to which the Evangelist John here refers was the Feast of Tabernacles. This was one of the three great Hebrew festivals, for the celebration of which all the males who were of sufficient age were required to appear before God.

The object of this festival was to make successive generations know that God "made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt."¹ The feast continued seven days, exclusive of the Sabbath immediately preceding. It commenced with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, and terminated with the twenty-third. The first day was a Sabbath, and during the seven days the people dwelt in booths made of the "boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook."² Because this festival fell at the end of the year, when the people "had gathered in their labours out of the field,"³ it was called "the feast of ingathering."

¹ Levit. xxiii. 43.

² Levit. xxiii. 40.

³ Exodus xxiii. 16.

Extraordinary sacrifices and offerings were presented to the Lord, and there was great and universal rejoicing.¹ In the time of our Saviour, ceremonies were observed, the foundation of which was not laid by Moses. Among these observances was a libation of water, brought with much ceremony, in a golden pitcher, from the Pool of Siloam, through the water-gate into the Temple, and poured upon the sacrifice, as it lay upon the altar, while the Levites sang, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."² And the people shouted for gladness, as men joy in harvest, and as they rejoice who divide the spoil. The gladness of the festival was one of its chief features, and biblical dictionaries tell us that men said, "Whoever has not witnessed the Feast of Tabernacles has no conception what a jubilee is," and "he that never saw the rejoicing of the drawing of water never saw rejoicing in all his life."

The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles was the chief day, the high day. And when Jerusalem was thronged with multitudes who had come to keep holyday, when booths of olive and of pine and of myrtle and of palm branches, and of branches of thick trees, were on the roof of every house, in the court of every dwelling, and in the courts of the Lord's house, and in the streets and lanes of the city, and when the people were at the height of joyous excitement, Jesus stood in the Temple and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." The words which follow would seem to limit the thirsting and the drinking to desire for, and satisfaction in, the gifts of the Holy Spirit; but we shall take a wider range, and shall speak—

¹ Deut. xvi. 13-15; Num. xxix. 12-38.

² Isaiah xii. 2, 3.

First, of man as a thirsty creature, and *secondly*, of the Saviour as a fountain of supply.

"If any man thirst." Every man does thirst. This we feel and observe, and thus know: 1st, every man thirsts constitutionally, naturally; thirsts not as accidentally excited, but as made by God to thirst.

We thirst for life. We desire to live on without annihilation, cessation, or suspension. In deep sorrow we may cry, "O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave;"¹ in unrest we may say, "I would not live away;"² with heaven opened to us, we may desire to depart and to be with Christ; but Satan spake truly when he said, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."³

We thirst for pleasure. We all desire enjoyment and happiness, according to our idea of felicity and our capacity for bliss. Man is not naturally a lover of misery. The self-torturer is an exception, and his conduct an eccentricity.

We thirst for activity. Men are not naturally lazy, but unnaturally. The inward wretchedness of the slothful, and their low estate, show that their inactivity is morbid. A desire to do is as natural as the desire to be. The awakening of self-consciousness in the infant is invariably attended with the putting forth of its powers.

We thirst for society. The results of the silent and solitary system in our prisons show that the desire for association is constitutional. Separate criminals from each other, or when they congregate mask their faces and keep the door of their lips, and you make the prison the highway to the mad-house or to the grave. Wise men in the midst of society may discourse upon the bliss of solitude, but the exile will moan and sigh, and sing—

"Oh! Solitude, where are the charms
That sages have seen in thy face?"

¹ Job xiv. 13.

² Job vii. 16.

³ Job ii. 4.

We thirst for knowledge. The subjects upon which we seek information, and the objects which we would have made manifest by light, vary; but all men desire, not only to continue in life, to act, to enjoy, and to associate, but also to know. Students, philosophers, busy-bodies, hearers, listeners, readers, observers, and lookers-on, combine to prove the existence of the same desire.

We thirst for power. We do this from the moment in which we seize the rattle and shake it, and are happy because the noise which amuses us is our own production, to the hour in which the dying man disposes by testament of his property, and gives commandment concerning his bones.

We thirst for the esteem and love of others. We desire the notice of their eye, and the listening of their ear, and the commendation of their lips. And we wish for their presence and company, their gifts and services, as outward and visible signs of inward thoughts about us, and of feelings responsive to pleasant thoughts.

We thirst for the possession of objects of beauty, for the beautiful in form, in colour, and in expression.

And we thirst for God. We desire to know what to us is infinite, to have intercourse with the creator-spirit, to submit to the supreme authority, to rejoice in a benignant presence, to shelter ourselves under an overshadowing providence, and to worship one whose claims upon our reverence we can cordially admit. That this thirst is natural, is proved by the fact that religion of some kind is, and ever has been, universal. There is not a nation of atheists. The experimental part of religion is based upon a sense of want, upon a constitutional thirst for God.

“If any man thirst.” All men have natural thirsts.

2. Beside those thirsts which are natural, there are

secondary and derived thirsts. These are dependent upon the particular condition of the individual, and are grafted upon the natural thirst.

Thus a desire for wealth may arise from a thirst for enjoyment, or for power, or for honour, or for particular social connections. In like manner, a thirst for freedom may be created by desire for activity, and a thirst for religious unity by desire for religious enjoyment.

To number the artificial thirsts of men would be now impossible, and to classify them would be difficult. The fact to which we call attention is this, any natural thirst may create other thirsts, and may be as the trunk of a tree to its several branches, and as a grain of wheat, sown as seed, to its manifold produce.

3. The natural, and many of the artificial thirsts of our nature, would have existed had man kept his first estate, but the entrance of sin has produced depraved thirsts. Sinfulness itself is a morbid thirst, and actual sin is the offspring of such thirst. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin."¹ Covetousness, envy, and such like, are depraved human thirsts.

4. The return of man to God, and his salvation by Christ Jesus, involve new thirsts. There is the thirst of the quickened spirit for particular religious knowledge, and the thirst of the penitent for pardon, and the thirst of the newborn spirit for righteousness, and the thirst of the godly for God, and the abiding thirst of the child of God for all that is godly, for being filled with the fulness of God.

5. There are a few facts connected with these thirsts of human nature which we may not, for the purpose of this discourse, overlook. These are the following :

¹ James i. 14, 15.

Those thirsts which are strictly natural and primitively constitutional, cannot be evil in themselves; and they are intended to work for good. Those thirsts which, being artificial, are the lawful expansions of the natural thirsts, are equally good in their character and influence.

The influence of our thirsts is most extensive and important. In some cases one thirst is a ruling passion, subduing the whole man unto itself, but in all cases the thirsts of the soul have a wondrous force. They govern thought, prompt the imagination, affect the judgment, awaken and quiet the emotions, and guide the will. Beside affecting the inner man, these thirsts lead to action. "Permanent thirsts are the parents of our habits." They also form our characters, weaving and dyeing the raiment in which we appear before our fellows, and they help to place us in the circumstances in which we are severally found.

Most potent, therefore, for good or for evil, are the desires of every man. A man is raised or cast down, destroyed or built up, benefited or injured, blessed or cursed, by the thirsts of his nature, and Jesus Christ, knowing what is in man, said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

When a man is sick, he needs not medicine irrespective of its nature, but he requires the specific or antidote or remedy for his particular disease. Poisoned food is more dangerous than continued hunger. Darkness is better than the will-o'-the-wisp. False information given about the enemy to an army on the battle-field, is more likely to be fatal than ignorance. The question of well-being does not depend upon men having access to cisterns which hold water, but upon the condition of that water. He is blessed—not whose thirsts are for the moment slaked, but whose thirsts are slaked at divine fountains.

Having thus looked at a man as a thirsty creature, thirsty in his primitive constitution, thirsty as a sinner, thirsty as a penitent, and thirsty in his redeemed nature,—let us now look, *secondly*, at Jesus Christ as a fountain of supply. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” Our Saviour here declares himself to be willing and able to satisfy all the lawful desires of the human spirit. Upon other occasions he spake words of similar import. Thus to the woman of Samaria, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”¹ And to a multitude at Capernaum, Jesus said, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst;”² and “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life.”³

“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.” Wonderful words these, even as revealing the heart and the resources of the Saviour, but wonderful as exhibiting the glorious position of all who believe on the Son of God. Let us illustrate them by the promises and by other words of Christ, taken in connexion with our lawful natural thirsts, and with those thirsts which are awakened by the quickening spirit of the redeeming God.

We thirst for continued life, and Jesus saith, “Come to me, and drink.” “By man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”⁴ “I am the resurrection, and the life,” saith the Lord: “he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”⁵ To die

¹ John iv. 10. ² John vi. 35. ³ John vi. 54. ⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

⁵ John xi. 25, 26.

in Christ is never to die. The body and the spirit will for a time be separated ; but this will be like removing the setting from a jewel, that the gold may be purified and formed into a shape more worthy of the gem. The body will be dissolved, but this will be like a corn of wheat falling into the ground and perishing as seed, that it may live as a plant. Instead of weakness there shall be power, instead of dishonour glory, and instead of corruption incorruption, and instead of mortality everlasting life.

Everlasting life ! By what aids can we conceive of everlasting life ? Some men say to us, Describe a circle ; let the sun be the centre, and let the line of circumference pass through the most distant planet. Let this be as one cycle of existence, and let such cycles be innumerable : this is everlasting life. Traverse the woods and forests of our planet during the season of leaf-fall, count the fallen leaves, and repeat this through endless years : this is everlasting life. Visit the deserts and sea-shores of our globe, number the sands, and let each grain represent a century : this is everlasting life. Separate the waters of this globe into drops, the waters of all pools and lakes, of all brooks and rivers, of all oceans and seas ; let each drop represent a century : this is everlasting life.

But these illustrations represent duration only, continued existence might be a curse. The life which Jesus promises is pure life and holy, peaceful life and happy, true life and godly ; life in a garden more paradisaical than that of Eden ; life in a country better far than Canaan ; life in a city more sacred than Jerusalem, more magnificent than Nineveh, Athens, or Rome ; life in a kingdom to which the kingdoms of this world yield no comparison ; and life in a home as peaceful and as pure as the heart of God.

Do we thirst for activity ? Jesus saith, " Come unto me,

and drink." Hear Jesus say, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."¹ He opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk, healed the sick, cleansed the leper, and raised the dead. But they who come to Christ shall not only run the race and fight the good fight of their own discipleship, but shall open the eyes of the understanding of their fellow men, open the ears of souls, quicken the dead in sins, and converting sinners from the error of their ways, save souls from death and hide a multitude of sins.

We thirst for enjoyment, and still Jesus saith, "Come to me, and drink." Christ gives joy in every gift, and promises it in every promise. There is joy in the eternal life he gives, joy in the rest he gives, and joy in the peace which he bequeaths. Christ connects it with every virtue, with all self-denial and self-sacrifice and cross-bearing. Hear him pronounce "blessed" the poor in spirit, the mourner, the meek, they which do hunger for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers. Hear him bid the persecuted for righteousness' sake rejoice and be exceeding glad. But mark these words, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."² A full joy was promised, and a full joy the early Christians had; hence Peter, addressing some of these first disciples, remarks, "Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."³

We thirst for power, and Christ continues to say, "Come to me, and drink," for he makes his disciples now the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and ultimately he makes them kings and priests unto God.

We thirst for society, and still Jesus saith, "Come to

¹ John xiv. 12.

² John xvi. 24.

³ 1 Peter i. 8.

me, and drink." Our Saviour makes those who are strangers and foreigners and aliens, fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God. All who come to Jesus, "come to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."¹

We thirst for the love of others, and Christ saith, "Come to me, and drink," for he directs streams of kindness to every one who comes to him by means of his new commandment, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."²

We thirst for knowledge, and Jesus saith, "Learn of me." "Come to me, and drink." Those who come to Jesus are instructed by him in the highest subjects. To all such Jesus is himself the truth, and the truth concerning all that it is essential we should know. He calls his disciples out of darkness into marvellous light, saying, concerning them, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."³

We thirst for God, and Jesus saith, "Come to me, and drink." He manifests God's name to us, and shows us the father he is unto us, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. He makes us who were far off nigh, reconciles us unto God, makes us the children of God, and secures a oneness with God, which is second only to his own oneness with the Father.

¹ Hebrews xii. 22, 23.

² John xiii. 34, 35.

³ John xvii. 3.

Thus if any man thirst for life, activity, pleasure, social fellowship, knowledge, power, the love of others, and for God, he may come to Jesus Christ and drink.

Thus far we have represented our Saviour as slaking the thirsts which are natural and which are not evil *per se*. If here we speak of depraved thirsts, it must be merely to say that they who thirst morbidly cannot come to Christ and drink; but they may come to him and be cured of their evil craving. As the thirst of fever may be removed by a physician, so may sinful thirsts of our nature be removed by our Saviour.

The thirsts of the returning prodigal and of the penitent sinner may be regarded as specially recognised in the words before us. That thirst for pardon and for the assurance of forgiveness which makes the bones wax old, and turns the moisture into the drought of summer; that thirst which the Psalmist represents when he prays,—“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities;”¹—that thirst which appears in the prayer of the Publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner;”² Jesus is prepared to quench with a free, complete, and irrevocable pardon, and with the cheering assurance, “Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.”³ “Go in peace.”⁴ “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”⁵

All the thirsts of the God-born spirit are recognised in our text. The thirst of the depressed in spiritual life for the renewing of the Holy Ghost, the thirst of the backslider for reunion with God and with his people, the thirst of the

¹ Psalm li. 1, 8, 9. ² Luke xviii. 13. ³ Mark ii. 5. ⁴ Mark v. 34. ⁵ John viii. 11.

doubter for certain religious knowledge, the thirst of the weak in faith for increase in faith, the thirst of the captive for the liberty of the sons of God, the thirst of the mourner for the consolations of God, the thirst of the weary and heavy-laden for rest, and the thirst of the exhausted for renewal of strength—all thirsts. Whatever may be the thirst, Jesus can slake it with living water. "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

From these words we might preach humanity, and show what is in man. We might exhibit man as a dependent, receptive, desiring, imbibing being, made up largely of thirsts. We might show that he is not like his maker, self-sufficient, but that in common with all living creatures he is capable of receiving from without, and that this receiving from without is essential to continuance, for he must drink to live. We might preach man in the number and variety of his affinities and aspirations, as thirsting for the water not of one well merely, but of wells in every province of the universe of God. We might speak of man as governed and ruled by particular thirsts, according to the constitution or training or circumstances of the individual.

But we will not now preach and teach man. We would rather preach and teach Jesus Christ. Using the text as a mirror in which to see our Saviour, the first thing which appears to us is—

The knowledge which Jesus had of human nature. He knew the thirsts of the multitude in whose midst he spake—the thirst of the boy of twelve in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles for the first time; the thirst of the youth conscious of the ripe life of coming manhood; the thirst of the son of Abraham, whose character and circumstances

had ten thousand counterparts; the thirst of the aged Jew for the rest of Abraham's bosom; the thirst of the daughters of Jerusalem, both wives and maidens; the thirst of just and devout men like Simeon, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and of holy women like Anna, waiting for redemption in Jerusalem; the thirst of the Pharisee and of the Sadducee and of the Herodian; the thirst of the stranger within the gates, Roman, and Greek, and men of the East,—every thirst of every soul Jesus knew.

The next noticeable point is—Jesus Christ's recognition of all that pertains to men. His words and his works meet most entirely all human needs. His words do not fly over our heads, or burrow in the earth beneath our feet, or pass us by as a bullet wide of the mark,—they come direct to our very heart. They are not like flowers given to starving men, or gauze raiment to the man of tattered garments in a wintry day, or clothes of fine silk to people covered with filthy rags; but like bread to the hungry, and warm clothes to the shivering beggar, and light from the rising sun to the lost and bewildered traveller. Are there any words which so entirely address our thinkings and imaginings and reasonings and hopings and fearings, our joys and regrets, our errings and our sufferings, as the words of the Lord Jesus? Surely every human heart will feel that it is spoken to, which hears Jesus say, "If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink."

But what must be the resources of one who is justified in speaking thus, "If any man thirst, let him come to *me*"? Can any individual be a fountain of supply to every man? There is one continually named by the sacred writers, who is spoken of as a sun, and a bright star, and a rock, and a tree, and a rose, and a fire, and a door, and bread, and a fountain. To him who can be all that is represented by

these varied figures, any man may surely come and drink. Each creature imparts benefits after its kind. No creature imparts all or even many kinds of good; but God is the spring of all that is valuable and beneficial, of the true and the beautiful and the good, of light and life, of all knowledge and power and pleasure and blessedness; and he is the Word, the manifested God made flesh, who saith, "Come to me, and drink." To how few of our thirsty fellow-men can any of us say, "Come to me, and drink." With respect to very few needs can we say to that few, "Come to me, and drink." But Jesus stands as in the centre of all time, as in the midst of all mankind, as on one of the poles of our globe, and, speaking to all men respecting all thirsts, saith, "Come to me, and drink." Did we need proof of the divinity, nay, the deity of Jesus Christ, we have it here. This is the voice of God and not of man. Who beside God can say to the world, "Come to me, and drink"? He must have the sufficiency of God and the fulness of God, who can invite a thirsty world to himself and promise that world satisfaction; and this he had and did who "in the last day, that great day of the feast, stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come to me, and drink." This, we repeat, is the voice of God and not of man, the voice of him who did say, "I am the Almighty God."¹ "I am that I am."²

If the resources of Jesus Christ, as exhibited by our text, appear to be of surpassing depth and breadth, what shall we say of his love as here presented to us, but that it also surpasseth knowledge? Behold what manner of love is this, which bids any thirsty man come. "Any"—the man may be atheist or deist or idolater; the man may be sceptical and unbelieving; the man may be broken-hearted,

¹ Gen. xvii. 1.

² Exodus iii. 14.

because all his cisterns are broken ; the man may be disappointed with all the wells to which he has been accustomed to resort ; the man may be an outcast, forbidden to come where men drink, or an apostate, one who has forsaken the fountain of living water ; the man may be conscious that he deserves only to die with thirst ; the man may be sad at his heart's core, and weary in every limb, and dying with thirst ; the thirst may be morbid and foul, the thirsts may be varied and deep, the thirsts may be refined and elevated, but to every man Jesus saith, "Come to me."

The thirsty one may have no apparel but rags and these filthy, and no vessel but one that is earthen and that broken, no money, no commendation, but Jesus saith, "Come." He may have nothing, and may need everything—life, knowledge, power, joy—still Jesus saith, "Come." He may be a most thirsty soul, with wide capacity and fiery eagerness, but Jesus saith, "Come and drink." And if those who hear Jesus say, "Come and drink," do come and drink, they live satisfied, they die satisfied, and they abide satisfied for ever and for ever ; but if they never come, they live thirsty, die thirsty, and abide madly thirsty for ever and for ever.

But mark, the thirsty have to come. To come in inquiry and by knowledge, to come in thought and by faith, to come in prayer and by trust, to come in the surrender of themselves to the Saviour. The sole condition is coming, and the only limit to the ministrations of the Saviour is our receptivity. All of life and light and power which we are capable of receiving from him, we have but to ask for and receive. What benevolence is here ! The depth, who can fathom ? The length, who can measure ? The breadth, who can span ? The height, who can scale ? The love of

the most benevolent of men, compared with the love of him who here speaks, is as the depth of the rainfall to the depths of the ocean, or as the length of a reservoir to the length of the longest river, or as the breadth of the cistern to the breadth of the largest lake, or the height of the loftiest housetop to the border line of earth's firmament. No words of the Lord Jesus more perfectly reveal the largeness of his heart and the extent of his resources than, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

In this last day, this great day of the feast, Jesus stands saying to us men, "Behold, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." "Come to me, and drink."

Our provision for religious worship and for preaching recognises the thirsts of human souls, their desire for life and knowledge and joy and salvation and God, and it equally recognises the gracious invitation of the Saviour as conveyed in the text. To this place men, thirsty men, will resort, and here Jesus will be heard saying, Come; Come to me; and Come to me and drink. As the scriptures are read, as Christ is preached, as the Father is worshipped, Jesus will be heard speaking and saying, "Come to me, and drink." And the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, supplementing Christ's voice, will say, "Come," and the bride of Christ, his church, will say, "Come," and many voices awakened by Christ's voice will say, "Come," and our hope is, that here multitudes of thirsty souls will come and drink, and that passing through the valley of Baca they will find here a well. "And in that day such shall say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also

is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord ; for he hath done excellent things. This is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion ; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.”¹

¹ Isaiah xii.

XVIII

“THE CUP OF SALVATION.”

“I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.”
PSALM cxvi. 13.

THIS Psalm describes some deliverance, and expresses the joy and gratitude of the delivered to the deliverer. Who wrote it, for what particular occasion it was composed, and who speaks in it, I do not know. Our ignorance on these points does not, however, prevent our learning the spiritual lessons which the Psalm teaches.

In the Bible, “the cup” is used to represent the condition of a man, his circumstances, and his portion. The Book of Psalms furnishes abundant illustrations. “Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.”¹ “The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.”² “My cup runneth over.”³ “Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.”⁴ “In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red.”⁵ The cup is our portion or condition,—joy or sorrow, prosperity or adversity, weal or woe, danger and distress or salvation. The cup of salvation is the condition of deliverance, which this Psalm

¹ Psalm xi. 6. ² Psalm xvi. 5. ³ Psalm xxiii. 5. ⁴ Psalm lx. 3.

⁵ Psalm lxxv. 8.

celebrates, not the drink-offering appointed by the law, not the cup of blessing. Noah's deliverance was a cup of salvation.

“To call upon the *name* of the Lord” is a phrase of greater power than to call upon the Lord. There is a reference, in the use of the word “name,” to the manifestations of God, to historical divine manifestations. In Exodus we read: “And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I am that I am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.”² The deliverance here celebrated was a name of God, and the author of this Psalm resolves to call upon God in harmony with this name, having first cordially accepted the divine deliverance.

There are four things here: *first*, God giving; *secondly*, His servant receiving; *thirdly*, His servant taking, and seeing God in what he receives; and *fourthly*, Worship, the fruit of what he receives from God and sees of God in his gifts.

First, God giving. The form which the giving takes, in this representation, is the hand of God presenting a cup. But we will leave the form of the idea for the thought itself. God giving.—Here is a personal God. This is not nature

² Exodus iii. 13-15.

giving, or providence giving, or the laws of the universe giving, but here is a giver with intelligence and heart and will. God giving.—Here is something, which the personal God has provided and arranged, held out to his creatures, a something in which he is willing to grant them an interest and a portion. God giving.—Here is a recognition of a relation with us upon God's part, and of dependence upon our part. God giving.—Here, in this case, is kindness shown. Goodness is manifested in all God's giving, in the cup of wrath as in the cup of blessing, but the cup of blessing is a revelation of love. The joyous things which God is said in holy scripture to give, are, meat in due season to the birds and the beasts and the innumerable creatures of the sea, power to get wealth, rain, quietness, songs in the night, right to the poor, deliverance, strength, sleep, wisdom, grace to the lowly, knowledge, power to the faint, the Spirit, the true bread, life, breath, all things, increase, all things richly to enjoy, wisdom, ability, light, his Son. And it is said, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."¹

The things which God bestows may be learned from the directions he gives us as to seeking, and from the great and precious promises he has made us. God giving.—This is the ultimate owner giving. This is giving on his part in whom the absolute right of possession is vested. This is righteous giving. This is giving which need not make us afraid of taking.

God giving. *Secondly*, Man taking. Here it may be said, Will he not invariably take? Must he not take? The taking here is not a simple laying hold of that which God gives, but the use and enjoyment of what God bestows. God gives health, and a man is healthy; wealth, and a man

¹ Romans vi. 23.

is wealthy ; strength, and a man is strong ; bread, and a man is fed ; but fear of sickness may prevent the enjoyment of health, and dread of poverty may prevent the enjoyment of wealth, and morbid emotions may destroy the consciousness of strength, and discontent may prevent our feeling that we have bread enough and to spare. There is a large multitude of blessings which we may hold without enjoying, and some which we may possess without using.

To take a blessing, in the sense of the text, is intelligently and with corresponding emotion to accept it from the giver. Accounting God the giver of all good, there are certain hindrances to our accepting blessings from himself. The various channels of nature and of art conceal God, as the source of good, from the eyes of men in particular positions, or rather stand-points, in which the means or agent is seen, rather than the Father of all mercies. In this case the blessing in question is said to have come to the man, or he has found it,—it is not accounted a gift. The cup of which we drink, like that in Benjamin's sack, has simply, as a matter of chance, been found by us. Then the ideal we form of the cup which should be presented to us is different from the actual cup, and we reject the actual because it does not correspond to the ideal. We have pictured a cup of gold, studded with gems and filled with the nectar of the gods, and the cup presented to us is an earthen vessel, filled with water from the well. Moreover, the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy. We see a cup presented to another which either is really better, or which appears to be better, than the cup offered to ourselves, and we refuse it under the promptings of a jealous heart ; or while we are taking the cup, or, say, drinking it, some sorrow encircles us, and as the fire burns around us, we dash the cup from our lips.

Thus did Israel push aside the cup of salvation, when encamped by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon, and they said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?"¹ and when pitched in Rephidim, they chode with Moses, saying, "Give us water that we may drink. . . Thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst."² There is a feeling in contrast with that just described. Sometimes there is a tendency to worship the cup in the hand of God, instead of taking that cup into our own hand. Thus is it with some men and the unspeakable gift, and thus with some men and the gospel of the grace of God. These are intended to be as the sun which gives us light and heat, and not as the meteor before which we stand gazing and wondering.

To take the cup of salvation is to receive a blessing in all its fulness, to the utmost limit of our receptive capacity, and of our power to accept and to enjoy.

God giving. Man taking and man taking consciously. *Thirdly*, God's servant seeing God in what he takes. There is a name of God on every cup and in each act of offering a cup. The words, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, represent the God who is to be seen in the lives of these men. But God is as really in the lives of John Robinson and Thomas Smith and William Jones, as in the lives of the patriarchs. God is in health and in healing, in wealth and in extrication from poverty, in prosperity and in lifting up out of adversity. In his giving and working and ministering and protecting, God is ever writing his name. He writes, "I am that I am."³ "I am the Almighty God."⁴ "The Lord God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of

¹ Exodus xiv. 11.

² Exodus xvii. 2, 3.

³ Exodus iii. 14.

⁴ Genesis xvii. 1.

great kindness.”¹ “God is light.”² “God is love.”³ And this writing is for me; some of it exclusively for me, and all of it for me; so far as I can see it, for my learning,—for my learning about my God.

We sometimes sing—

“Then in the history of my age,
When men review my days,
They’ll read thy love in every page,
In every line thy praise.”

But let us not leave the review of our days to others, or the reading to the eyes of our neighbours. Let *us* read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest for ourselves. Some men see themselves only in that which they have, other men see the creature only, and others what they call nature, chance, fortune. The cup appears without a hand, or the hand appears without an arm, or the arm appears without a form or shape to which it is attached. One point of difference between the godly and ungodly is, that the former see God in connexion with their cup, and that the latter see him not. As far as a landscape without sunshine is inferior to a landscape upon which the sun sheds his rays, is the appearance of blessings when separated from God, to the same blessings when regarded as the gift of his hand.

“I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord.” God giving, man receiving, man seeing God in what he receives; and *fourthly*, Worship, the fruit of what we receive and see. “And will call upon the name of the Lord.” Past and present gifts on the part of God should encourage us in three things—prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. God *has* given to us, *is* giving to us, and therefore let us ask him for more. This is the spirit of the

¹ Joel ii. 13.

² 1 John i. 5.

³ 1 John iv. 16.

first verse. "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."¹ Our human friends have by giving exhausted their resources; we know it, and cannot call upon them again. They have expended their disposition to serve us; we perceive it, and cannot call upon them again. Possessing both the means and the heart to serve us, we look upon them timidly and distrustfully, and are afraid to call upon them again. Or our human friends are disabled altogether, they are brought low, are removed to a distance, have died, and it is impossible to call upon them again. As our human friends have written their names by their lives, they have written "finite," "mortal," "sinful," "weak," and we cannot by requests for other blessings call upon their names. But as God by the cup which he offers me writes "infinite," "almighty," "good," "love," "I will take the cup of salvation, and will call upon the name of the Lord." More—more from God—that is what we will seek from God. He has more. He wishes to bestow more. He prefers presenting cup after cup running over.

God has given, and still gives; we will therefore call upon him in thanksgiving. For each cup we will bless him. With David we will say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's."² Thanksgiving, to be real and genuine, must

¹ Psalm cxvi. 1, 2.

² Psalm ciii. 1-5.

be particular. When men say, 'For all his mercies, God's holy name be blest and praised,' the heart is scarcely stirred; but when we make mention of health and pardon, and other particular mercies, the soul vibrates under the recognition. As we see each cup presented to us, as we take it and drink it, let us offer unto God thanksgiving. This will turn every act of receiving into an eucharist, it will be also an act of giving thanks.

God has given, and does still give to us; let us call upon the name of the Lord by praising him. The distinction between thanksgiving and praise is not a distinction without a difference. We give thanks when we say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities." We praise when we say, "Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee."¹ In thanksgiving we recognise what God gives; in praise we acknowledge what God himself is. Examples of thanksgiving and praise abound in the Book of Psalms. Let us try to imbibe their spirit, and let our praise of God be according to the wonders which he has wrought for us, and according to his name, as appearing in these wonders.

Be this our resolve in the house of our God to-day. Some here present have not taken the cup of the common salvation. God presents that cup. You are looking at it, gazing at it, but you have not taken it. Say, I will take it. Life is shortening, and you are not saved. Sins are multiplying, and you are not saved. Salvation is ready for you, offered to you, and you are not saved. How can ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation? Some have taken it, but not fully and cordially. They act as though they thought God did not mean to give it, or as though they felt he had some

¹ Psalm lxxxvi. 5.

reserve in offering it. Take it heartily, and take it wholly. Others here present have not taken the cup of a particular salvation. God has wrought deliverance from some sorrow, but it has not been cordially accepted. There is a sullen remembrance of past sorrow, which prevents the full enjoyment of present blessings. Take the cup of salvation and drink it, not partially but exhaustively. Not to do this is to be unfilial and ungrateful. Is there one amongst us who is extracting from God's gifts all the pleasure and advantage which they are adapted to yield? This is an item in which we fall short. How much more happy we should all be, if we only received all that God offers and accepted more cordially that which we do take! A writer in "The Reader" of July 1st, in an admirable article on Thermo-electrical Science, observes: "Like windmills, thermo-electric batteries might be erected over the country, and entrap, finally converting into mechanical motion, and thus into money, gleams of sunshine, which would be as wind to the sails of the mill. What stores of fabulous wealth are, as far as our earth is concerned, constantly wasted by the non-retention of solar rays poured on the desert of Sahara. Nature here refuses to use her wonderful radiation net, for we cannot cover the desert sands with trees, and man is left alone to try his skill in retaining solar energy. Hitherto helpless, we need not be so much longer, and the force of a Sahara sun may be carried through wires to Cairo, and thence irrigate the desert, or possibly, if need be, it could pulsate under our streets, and be made to burn in Greenland."

Take up your neglected mercies, my brethren. Take the cup which you have overlooked and despised. Take the cup entirely, which you have taken but partially, and with the taking of every cup call upon the name of the Lord.

God is in that cup—behold him. God's name is on that cup—read the inscription and call upon his name. "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion."¹ "Praise God in his sanctuary."² "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of the saints."³

"The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from his gifts to draw a plea,
And ask him still for more."

¹ Psalm cxlvii. 12.

² Psalm cl. 1.

³ Psalm cxlix. 1.

XIX

THE STRENGTH OF A SAINT.

"Thy God hath commanded thy strength."—PSALM lxxviii. 28.

THESE words are our text. The Psalm whence they are taken, was probably composed on the occasion of the removal of the ark of God from the house of Abinadab to the tent which David had pitched for it upon Zion. The opening verse is a form of words employed by Moses during Israel's wanderings in the wilderness, when the ark set forward. On those occasions the leader of Israel publicly said, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee."¹ And David here, changing the second person to the third, writes, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him." After expanding the invocation, the Psalmist rehearses some of the mighty deeds of God, and ends his recital with the exhortation, "Bless ye God in the congregations—the Lord, from the fountain of Israel. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah with their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali." There are twelve tribes of Israel, all of which have sprung from Jacob's stock. Benjamin "ravins as the wolf: in the

¹ Numbers x. 35.

morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil."¹ "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee."² "Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words."³ "Zebulun dwells at the haven of the sea, and his border is unto Zidon."⁴ Then let the boldness of Benjamin be united with the energy of Judah, and with the tenderness of Naphtali, in blessing and in serving God; and let not distance separate Zebulun, but let all the tribes consecrate their varied powers and resources to the one service of praise; for "Thy God hath commanded thy strength."

Singularly appropriate to the occasion for which they were composed are these stimulating words. The ark of God had during several years been kept in private houses. David had pitched a tent for its reception and intended providing a better shrine; he would deposit the ark in the temporary sanctuary, and he gathers thirty thousand chosen men of Israel, and with these and with a multitude of the people he proceeds to the house in which the ark had been kept. The people *can* render the service of song, so "David and all the house of Israel play before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals."⁵ The breach of Uzzah delayed the restoration of the ark three months; but David returned to the work, and with gladness, with burnt offerings and peace offerings, with feasting, dancing, and the sound of a trumpet, he brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place in the tabernacle he had pitched for it. David *can* provide a sacred place for the ark of his God, and his "God has

¹ Gen. xlix. 27.

² Gen. xlix. 8.

³ Gen. xlix. 21.

⁴ Gen. xlix. 13.

⁵ 2 Sam. vi. 5.

commanded his strength." Thirty thousand chosen men *can* attend on this occasion, and a multitude besides. Then why should they tarry at home? The occasion is worthy of their presence, and their "God has commanded their strength." There are sweet singers and skilful players in Israel, and why should they be silent? The occasion calls for praise, and their "God has commanded their strength." There are cattle upon the thousand hills of Canaan, and shall no sacrifice be brought? The occasion demands oblations, and Israel's "God has commanded their strength." There is a mountain in Canaan, beautiful for situation and rich in historic association. God's ark *can* be brought to this mountain, and if it can be, it ought to be, for Israel's God has commanded Israel's strength. There are twelve tribes in Israel which may unite in bringing up God's ark, then let none hold back, for their "God has commanded their strength." "Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel."¹

Suitable as these words are to the occasion for which they were composed, they are not less appropriate to the circumstances in which we meet, and we may consider them as addressed to the individual Christian, and to the church of the Saviour in our own day. With this sense of the seasonableness of our text, we proceed to unfold it, and in doing this let us *first* inquire: What is the strength of a saint? We take the word "saint" from the Psalm before us, and use it, according to Bible usage, to denote the saved of mankind, the holy, those in whom is true religion. The saints in David's day were all who had made a covenant with God by sacrifice, and they are mentioned as ordinary, and not as extraordinarily religious, persons. Saints in the apostles' days were the common Christians in Rome,

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 26.

Corinth, Ephesus, Colosse, indeed all in every place who called upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord; and we use the word with this wide signification. What then, we ask, is the strength of a saint?

1. The strength of a saint is the strength of a regenerated man. A regenerated man is not less a man for his regeneration. On the contrary, natural power is brought out in the new birth and sanctified, especially all that is characteristic of human nature. The "strength" of a man is not in the body. The eye of the lynx and of the eagle, the ear of the bat and mole, the olfactory organ of the dog, and the voices of singing-birds, are far superior to the corresponding organs in the human animal. The strength of a man's arm is weakness to the paw of a lion, and the speed of the antelope and ostrich is to the swiftness of man's foot as the fastness of the railroad train to the pace of the horse. The human hand, and the nervous system, give man an immense advantage over other animals; but taken as animals, mankind are among the most defenceless of beings, and are excelled in particular organs and members by a considerable number of the inferior creatures. The "strength" of a man, we repeat, is not in the body. The mightiest human works are accomplished, not by the brute force of man, but by his employing the force of some natural law and the power of some natural element or material. "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."¹ Herein lies his strength. The man is a being within a being, a life within a life, and in the faculties of this inner nature is his strength. The human spirit hath eyes, and what is the sight of an eagle to a vision that unites the past and the future with the present, and that outside the immeasurable

¹ Job xxxii. 8.

material wanders over the infinite and eternal. To see a truth is more than to behold the sun, and to see the universe with one's eyes is nothing to seeing God. The spirit hath ears as well as eyes, and what hearing is so near and far-reaching as the listening of a soul? The angels gather from above the stars, from before creation and from after time. The spirit speaks as well as listens, sees, and what utterance is so powerful as prayer, or so soft as the secret confessions of the heart, or so sweet and melodious and harmonious as the name of Jehovah's name? The spirit has the power of varied sensation. No speed equals that of the eagle when it followeth hard after God, and all animal strength falls far short of the power to will and to do a good pleasure. The natural power of man's spirit is small. Man can reason, and believe, and discern the rightness of actions, and he can so originate and sustain his actions as to be responsible for it all. Now real religion is the power of destroying the man in order to produce the saint out of the quickened and renewed man. The natural nature is to the redeemed man what the Virgin Mary was to Christ. But while that which is constitutional and natural is preserved, the saint has more than natural power. The strength of a saint is the true constitutional strength of a man, as restored in the redemption that is in Christ.

2. The strength of a man is in his likeness to God. He is being first made, and then renewed, in the image of God. That in the man which is most like to God makes his strength of the man. God in the man is the strength of the man. God is a Spirit, and there is a spirit in man. The chief strength of man lies in his spirit. God in the man, after God, is created and new created in the image of God, and his strength and true holiness. His strength lies in his mo-

in his being new created unto good works. God is love, and a man's strength is in a love, so out-loving that it embraces not only God's creatures, but God's own self. The highest strength of man, then, is not in muscle and nerve, not even in thought and reason. He is the strongest man, who with least deviation doeth the will of my Father in heaven. He is the strongest man who loveth most, for he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

To obey God, and to love both God and his creatures, this is the putting forth of the highest strength of man, and the highest creature power. To obey is next to command, and to love is second only to being the object of love. Next to God is the being who obeys and loves him best. Here we see the superiority of the spiritual over the material. So far as the material part of the human constitution is concerned, the body of a man, when compared say with the sun, is so little that a comparison would provoke a smile; and yet the knowledge which an infant may have of God, and the love it may feel towards God, raise this mite in creation so far above the ruler of our day, that the sunlight is in comparison darkness, and the sunheat zero cold. In the one case you have lifeless light and heat, and in the other the light and warmth of God-like life. We might extend these illustrations almost indefinitely. What is the strength of a mountain to stand before God, compared with the power of a man to walk with God? What is the strength of the river to run into the sea, or of the sea to turn dry land into channels of water, compared with the force of a soul, when it pours itself out unto God, or satisfies its thirsts by drinking of the rivers of his pleasure? What is the sapphire of the firmament, the verdure of the pastures, the loveliness of spring, compared with the beauty of holiness? Were it possible for man to unite in himself bodily all that is strong

in the material creation, that strength would be perfect weakness, contrasted with the might of the inner and spiritual man.

The strength of a saint is the primitive strength of man restored in redemption ; it is the strength of a man renewed in the likeness of God ; it is the strength of the spirit's eye and ear and hand and feet and tongue, as well as the power of the inferior nature. "Thy strength" is thy best—all that is within thee ; all that thou canst do, and be, and become ; and all that thou hast—the two mites, if these be all, and the alabaster box of spikenard, very costly, if this be thy possession.

Let me here remark, as we pass along, that the strength of the church is in the individual godlikeness of its members, and in the divine unity of the whole. "Thy God hath commanded thy strength."

Secondly. We will expound the fact that the strength of a saint God has commanded.

"Thy God hath commanded." This is right royal language, a style of speech fitly representing the prerogatives of the king. "Commanded," by what?—1. By what God is and by what he reveals himself to be. If there be a God, that which constitutes the Divine Being, God, commands my strength. He is first and he is last, and he is in all, and above all. There is none beside him, none before him, none like to him, none good but he. He fills heaven and earth. If a number of brilliant objects be presented, the brightest will attract the eye, and in a number of sounds the loudest or the sweetest will attract the ear. On this principle the man who knows God will address him and say, "O God, my heart is fixed : I will sing and give praise."¹ "If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong : and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead?"² If I

¹ Psalm lvii. 7.

² Job ix. 19.

would love the best being, if I would obey the final authority, if I would advance the highest end, if I would render the noblest service, I must acknowledge that God commands my strength.

“Comanded,” by what?—2. By the relation which God has established between every man and himself. “Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?”¹ We are all his offspring. “It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”² If God be a father he can command our honour, and if he be a master he can command our fear. A man may say, “There is no God,” but the true God is his God. Men may sceptically or scoffingly ask, “Doth God know?” yet the true God is their God. A man who in character is ungodly has the true God for his God. Those who are without God in the world might each be directed to Jehovah in the words of our text, saying to them severally, “Thy God.” Here is an indissoluble, immutable, abiding relation. God and man will ever be connected. I may forget God, but he is my God still. I may deny God, but he is my God still. And whether my future life be spent in God’s prison or in God’s palace, God will be my God still. Here see that, strictly speaking, religion is not a matter of choice. It is not optional with me to recognise God. Real, subjective religion is the pure nature and the true constitution of our being. And I have no choice, I am shut up by the very nature of the case to the service of God. So that if I be irreligious and ungodly, I am denying the first and the last relationship, I am neglecting the most certain and the plainest obligations, I am supremely ungrateful, unfilial, unjust, unnatural. “Thy God;” because Jehovah is thy God, he “hath commanded thy strength.”

¹ Malachi ii. 10.

² Psalm c. 3.

“Commanded,” by what?—3. By a law of loyalty which he has written in the heart. A converted man is a man come to himself. A religious man is a man truly himself. Sin is moral insanity. It is not human to sin, but sub-human. It is not super-human to be godly, but human—the true ideal of man. Hence David said, “My goodness extendeth not to thee;”¹ and Christ taught his disciples, “After ye have done all say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”² Religion, to the man who hath it, is not a something added to himself, but himself in moral health, activity, and life. Hence a Christian, instead of thinking it strange that he should walk with God by Christ, wonders that he was not a Christian long before. And by this inward consciousness that godliness is right, and that it alone is right to man, “thy God hath commanded thy strength.”

Because this law, as written on our hearts, has become by our own apostacy almost illegible, God commands our strength,

4. By external verbal law. Using our signs and sounds, God spake these words and said: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” “Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.” “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.”³ “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”⁴ And with this law agrees the teaching of the Saviour and his apostles: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”⁵ “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”⁶

¹ Psalm xvi. 2. ² Luke xvii. 10. ³ Exodus xx. 3, 5, 7. ⁴ Deut. vi. 5.

⁵ Matt. vi. 33. ⁶ 1 Cor. x. 31.

But we leave precept and prohibition for that which has superior power. God commands our strength,

5. By the claims of the new kingdom of his grace. "God is by Christ reconciling the world unto himself."¹ We have left God, and he seeks us. We wander farther and farther from God, and he bids us turn and come back. Guilty, he provides us with a sin-offering; in a low estate, he sends to us a Saviour; and by this dispensation of grace God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, while he inscribes upon the hearts of those who have repented the words, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price."² As a mother commands the child she has fondly nursed in dangerous illness, and as a father commands a repentant prodigal whom he has forgiven, and as a creditor commands the debtor whose obligations he has remitted, and as the benefactor commands the beneficiary, so thy God, O Christian, commands thee, and thy God commands thy strength. He proves to you that he loves you with an everlasting love, and his love commands thee. He gives as your Saviour his only Son, and this gift commands thee. He pardons you, receives you as a child, and places you under a complete remedial ministrations, and all this rich grace commands you. God's heart commands thy heart. Yes, brethren, the commanding is now more from love than from law. God brings us back to law by the suasions of love. And how many more love-of-God voices there are in the world than law-of-God voices! Suffering is law-voice, crying in its penalties, 'Thou shalt,' and 'Thou shalt not.' Pleasure and happiness are love-voices, wooing and winning us, and saying, 'Wilt thou not?' And how do benedictions and the circumstances that are oyouous preponderate over the circumstances that are grievous, even

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19.² 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

in the case of the transgressor! By the benefits God confers upon us he commands our strength.

And thus, by that which God is in himself, by that which God is to us, by law on the heart, and by law oral and written, by the new kingdom of his love, and by all his benefits, "Thy God commands thy strength." He speaks from the beginning and from the end of time, from the midst of chaos and from the new heavens and new earth, from Bethel and from Gethsemane, from Sinai and from Calvary, and he saith to us all, "My son, give me thine heart," consecrate to me thy best, and devote to me thy strength.

Thirdly. Suffer me to urge you to yield yourselves unto God, and to consecrate to him that strength which by the text he commands. Say not as an excuse for withholding, "I have no strength," "I am a little child," "I am small and despised," "I am a worm and no man," "My strength is dried up like a potsherd." I have read of one who to a man sick of the palsy said, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk;"¹ and who to a man with a withered hand said, "Stretch forth thine hand;"² and who to a dead child said, "Damsel, arise;"³ and who to a dead man said, "Lazarus, come forth;"⁴ and who to one that was deaf said, "Ephphatha."⁵ And I read that the paralytics at his sword walked and stretched out their hands, the damsel and the entombed man came back to life, and the deaf ear was opened. He of whom we thus speak is thy Saviour! By the same being God speaks to thee, now that he commands thy strength. The will to do will be rewarded with the power to do; and if your strength be only the weakness of a broken heart, "a broken and a contrite spirit God will not despise."⁶

¹ Mark ii. 11.

² Matt. xii. 13.

³ Mark v. 41.

⁴ John xi. 43.

⁵ Mark vii. 34.

⁶ Psalm li. 17.

Give God your strength. It is treason to withhold it. The one God is your one king. To yield your best to any object short of himself is disloyalty. You are in his kingdom, and your reasonable service is full allegiance. It is simply right to live to God. There is no particular virtue in it; this is simply what you owe. Anything less is sin. The perfection of such a life has no superfluous merit. You cannot go beyond what is meet and right in the service of God. Oh, how do such phrases as "eminently pious" mislead! They seem to say that a man may in the life of piety get beyond what is demanded of him. The fact is, that when a man is godly from core to surface, from centre to circumference, he is but living up to his first and plainest duty.

Give God your strength. A full blessing will attend the consecration. Butler says, "Going over the theory of virtue in one's thoughts, talking well and drawing fine pictures of it, this is so far from necessarily, or certainly, conducing to form a habit of it in him who thus employs himself, that it may harden the mind in a contrary course, and render it gradually more insensible, that is, form a habit of insensibility to all moral considerations. For from our very faculties of habits, passive impressions, by being repeated, grow weaker. Thoughts by often passing through the mind are felt less sensibly; being accustomed to danger that lessens fear, to distress lessens the passion of pity, to instances of others' mortality lessens the sensible apprehension of our own." By these words we are reminded that while repetition strengthens practical habits, it weakens passive impressions. And see how this bears upon our subject. Mere reading and hearing and speaking of God, will make God less and less real to you. You may send God farther and farther from you by mere thought and talk. But live to him, act as under his omniscience, love him,

bend your will to his, and instead of a great ghost of a may-be God haunting you, you will many times a day instinctively speak as to a real being, and you will say, "O God, thou art my God."

Yield your "strength" to God. For your neglect of this there is no valid excuse. The mother pleads the care of her children, and the man of business the demands of trade, and the public man the claims of citizenship and of the state. But there is nothing valid in these pleas. God does not ask the woman to forget her sucking child; on the contrary, he has so constituted her that, unless she transgress the laws which he has written in her body and in her soul, she must remember the son of her womb. God does not call away the man of business from any lawful occupation, and bid him spend his time in meditation or in prayers. He has so placed the man, that if he were not to work, and that diligently, he would, to the extent of this neglect, be an irreligious man. God intends the mother to be a mother, and the man to be a working man. And if both will see God, and live to God as above all and through all and in all, there will be nothing in a home, nothing in secular employment, to retard the growth or to check the expression of pure religion; on the contrary, domestic and business claims will be so met as to form a large part of the religious life. Ye mothers, let your aim be, not to repeat yourselves in your children, but to reflect God. And ye men of trade and commerce, let your end be, not so much the amount of money to be got by your business as its transaction upon principles which will bring glory to God. It is true this will involve you in social withdrawals and in separations from evil, but these will be distance from what does you harm, and nearness to the source of boundless good.

“ Though like a wanderer,
The sun gone down—
Darkness comes over me,
My rest a stone ;
Yet in my dreams I'd be
Nearer, my God, to thee—
Nearer to thee !”

Such goings forth, though from country and from kindred and from father's house, would not lead to solitude and to desolation, but to a Jacob's Bethel, to many mansions in our Father's house. Besides, it is because God sees you in entanglement, that by a Redeemer he commands your strength. If you had been in the fold, instead of being caught in the thicket, the Shepherd would not have been sent to the dark mountains to seek you. And if Jesus Christ does not deliver you from that which is ungodly within you, and from the evil that is in the world, of what use is he to you? Do you say, 'He saves me from hell'? We answer, Can you know that, except as he cleanses you from sin? Moreover, can Jesus save you from hell, except as he delivers you from evil? If, O man, you are living in love of the world, without the love of the Father, you are now at work burrowing your hell, and if you be only left alone, your hell shall be deep enough, dark enough, even for a devil.

Brethren, we do not need more done for us to secure the complete yielding of ourselves to God; what we require is to do more for ourselves. The husbandman ploughs and sows and reaps. He does not plough all day to sow, or sow merely for sowing's sake. The refiner places the gold and silver in the fire, and brings forth metal purged from dross. The lapidary plies the precious stone with his art, and brings out its peculiar lustre or its beautiful hue. And has not God laboured as the husbandman? and sat as the refiner

and purifier of silver? What more can he do for his vineyard? I appeal to those often in affliction. Have ye suffered so many things in vain?—if it be yet in vain. God, in permitting the grave to be opened to receive the desire of your eyes, or the husband of your heart, or the child of your bosom, had an eye to commanding your strength. With such losses shall there be connected no gain? God winged your riches and they flew, or he filled your home with pestilence that in darkness laid down your household, or he sent a worm to the root of your gourd; and with this ploughing and harrowing shall there be no improvement in the soil? By his own book and by other books, by prophets and apostles, by pastors and teachers, by his Spirit and by his Son, God has been like a sower that went forth to sow. And shall the seed fall by the way-side, upon stony places, or among thorns? God has actually arisen—come out of his place, come down from his throne—to command our strength. He spake to us from above, and we did not listen; he now speaks here below. He spake as God, and we did not hear; he now speaks by his Son, so that by the strongest even of divine voices, “thy God hath commanded thy strength.”

Yield God thy strength. In worship give him thy strength. If in providing a house of prayer you are able to employ the science of the architect and the art of the mason and carver, if you can frame a darkened roof on light and lofty pillars, if you can spring the arches of a ribbed aisle from carved corbels, locking the arches in sculptured key-stones, and forming your pillars light as bundles of lances bound with garlands, if you can construct your windows of foliaged tracery, and render the entire edifice sweet as melody and complete as harmony, do it, but remember this is not thy whole strength. If in the appointments of the house of

devotion you can secure an embodiment of order, and a seamless garment of religious decency, do it, but remember this is not the whole of thy strength. If in the services of the house of worship you can secure the sweetest voices, tuned by music, and accompanied by instruments; if for every act of devotion you can command words that burn, and thoughts that breathe, do it, but know that this is not the whole of thy strength. Thy strength is to worship God in spirit, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and to have no confidence in the flesh—

“He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small.”

Worship then in spirit and in truth. Use the power of praise. Bless the Lord with all that is within you.

“Let vain or busy thoughts have there no part;
Bring not thy plough, thy plots, thy pleasures thither;
Christ purged his Temple, so must thou thy heart.”

In all service give God thy strength. Worship is a very small part of the service which God requires; and if you only offer him what men term “devotions,” he will rebuke you and will say, “Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me: the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.”¹ God requires us to love him at all times, and to obey him in all things. Let us awake and do it by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. “Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”²

The progression of the individual man, like the progression of the race and of the church, is by antagonism. And this

¹ Isaiah i. 12, 13.

² Psalm lxxviii. 13.

involves incessant spiritual hardship. But in the midst of our conflicts the Almighty God addresses us, saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."¹ "Be strong therefore in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."² "I speak unto you, fathers, because ye have known him from the beginning. I speak unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and ye have overcome the wicked one. I speak unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father."³ The God and Father of you all has commanded your strength. Then, whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might. Think vigorously, reason carefully, judge accurately; have faith without credulity, love fervently, hope to the end; let your joy be full, let prudence possess you in every sphere; pray without ceasing, obey entirely, serve devotedly, be single in purpose, and unite your heart to fear God's name. And as my object, by this sermon, is to write the text on your spirit, let me part from you by repeating the text with the variation of emphasis which its force and fulness justify, saying, "*Thy God hath commanded thy strength.*" "*Thy God hath commanded thy strength.*" "*Thy God hath commanded thy strength.*"

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9. ² 2 Tim. ii. 1. ³ 1 John ii. 13.

XX

“THE FULNESS OF GOD.”

“That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”
EPHESIANS iii. 19.

THESE words are truly Pauline,—deep, broad, and powerful. We do not, perhaps, when first reading or hearing them, exactly comprehend their meaning, but we immediately feel their force. “Fulness of God.”—These words produce a sensation like that created by looking down into some abyss, by looking up to some lofty height, or by looking across some wide expanse.

The word rendered “fulness” represents completion, perfection, and sufficiency. If a vessel having some water in it were filled to the brim, this word would represent its condition in relation to its contents. If a picture were drawn in rude outline, and if the limning were then made perfect, this word would represent the completed state of the artist’s work. If the crew of a ship, or the guard on the walls of a fenced city, were deficient in number, and if the men were so increased as to meet the need, this word would represent the complement.

Fulness and God must be combined, must ever be inseparable. We cannot conceive of a state of things

in which there is not one perfect being, and his perfection is fulness. Fulness! absolute fulness is God, and God is fulness. "There is none good but one," said Jesus Christ, "and that is God."¹ This is the fulness of God—all good in God. Is not this what we mean by Infinity? The fulness of God; we may put it thus: God has no deficiency. All that can be known, he knows. All that can be done, he can do. All that can be bestowed, he can give. All possible experiences of good are in himself. God has no morbid sense of want. There is no deficiency or infirmity by which such a consciousness can be awakened. God is satisfied with himself. His witness to himself must ever be, "I am that I am."² "I am the Almighty God;"³ and in worshipping him we must ever say, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding."⁴

The fulness of God is then the perfection and sufficiency of God; and the Apostle Paul here tells the Ephesians that he "bowed his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant," with other blessings which he names, "that they might be filled with the fulness of God." Two distinct, though harmonious, views may be taken of these words. They may mean filled *from* the fulness of God, or filled *as* the fulness of God. We adopt the latter view, but we observe that the former must be included in the latter, seeing that none can be filled *as* the fulness of God, who are not filled *from* that fulness.

The truth which this view of the text presents is in harmony with such words as these: "I am the Almighty

¹ Matt. xix. 17. ² Exodus iii. 14. ³ Gen. xvii. 1. ⁴ Isaiah xl. 13, 14.

God; walk before me, and be thou perfect."¹ "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God."² "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."³ To be filled even as the fulness of God, is to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

"That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." These words represent—I. A large receptive capacity on the part of Christians. II. God the standard, while the source and cause, of completeness. III. A degree of approximation to that standard now attainable.

"That ye might be filled." This is not asking for fresh powers and for new susceptibilities, but for the entire contact of existing faculties and capacities with appropriate and adequate objects. The capabilities of human nature are many and various. Man can receive into himself a varied and vast knowledge. He can admit to his nature the images of all the objects which awaken the various emotions of the human soul. The Saviour and his apostles speak of being filled with "all joy and peace," "with the Holy Ghost," "with all knowledge," "with comfort," "with the fruits of righteousness," "with the knowledge of his will," "with righteousness," of being full "of light," "of faith," "of good works and alms-deeds," and "of goodness." The text names "the fulness of God."

The receptive capacity of man may be illustrated by reference to three things: 1. The extent and variety of possible knowledge. 2. The number and character of the objects which arouse the various internal spiritual affections. 3. The influences which are formative of character and productive of conduct. Every living thing has a measure of receptivity, whether it be a citizen of the vegetable, animal, or spiritual kingdom, and its receptive capacity is according

¹ Gen. xvii. 1.

² Deut. xviii. 13.

³ Matt. v. 48.

to its position in the scale of life. Man, being at the summit, is most receptive, and wondrous in his capacity of receiving ideas and impressions, and of enshrining objects in his heart. Think of the images of things which may fill the human mind; things past, present, and future, earthly things and heavenly, actual things and imaginary, from the image of a grain of sand to the image of the sun, from the image of an insect to that of a seraph, from the image of a little child to the spiritual conception of the great Father, God. What an ark of Noah is a human soul! what a garden! what a repository! What a world of images is within a man's mind! No picture gallery, though it have a length and breadth of many miles, can be compared with this. Thoughts, conceptions, memories, fancies, ideas innumerable are there. That nature must have large receptive powers, which can admit ideas of the future and of the past as well as of the present, ideas of the infinite as well as of the finite, ideas of eternity as of time, ideas of the Creator as of the creature. That nature must have a large receptive capacity which will admit the great eternal God; and between such a nature and the nature which falls short of such a capacity there must be a great gulf.

The objects which awaken the emotional susceptibilities are almost as numerous as the objects which dwell in the intellectual faculties. Who can count the objects of surprise and of wonder, of beauty and sublimity, of approbation and disapprobation, of love and hatred and pride, of anger, gratitude, and regret, of gladness, remorse, and self-approbation, and those objects of desire which occupy a distinct shrine or a separate receptacle of our nature? The mere attempt to classify these objects impresses us with their numerical importance. What a broad nature that must be, which can admit to itself objects producing such

deep and varied excitement! And according to these objects are the influences continually working upon us, and the motives by which actions are produced. Machinery is generally adapted to work in subjection to one force only—wind or water, steam or electricity; but man is so constituted that powers of all kinds, and powers from all quarters, are mighty over him. And although salvation subjects us to God as the first and the last, and in all that pertains to influence over us makes the divine supreme, it leaves us sensitive toward all other lawful influences. But we hasten to remark, that what the Scriptures call regeneration and conversion to God, increases the receptivity of our nature. In the new knowledge and in the new affections which this state involves, there is an expansive power. It is true that religious knowledge and the religious affections have an expulsive power in the direction of vain and evil objects; but it is also true that they have a blessed power of enlargement. The spirit in which God dwells, has room within it for everything whose presence is lawful and beneficial. Godliness and a narrow mind, godliness and a narrow heart, are, to say the least, gross inconsistencies. Are they not in spiritual combination impossibilities? The thin shadow of speculation, or mere opinion about God, requires but little room; but an in-dwelling God involves a capacious soul. The humid heat of spring and summer expands the bud of the flower, and the fruit of the tree, and the grain in the ear; and the coming into a spirit of God enlarges that spirit. Then, when God enters a soul, he brings other objects with him. He comes with all his glorious train; so that in measure every soul redeemed unto God is "filled." No redeemed man is a well without water, or a tree without fruit, or a vine without clusters, or a field without produce, or a casket without treasure,

or a vessel without contents ; but the water may be low, and the fruit scanty, and the produce small, and the treasure insignificant ; and hence the prayer that "ye might be filled even as the fulness of God."

Let us, *secondly*, look at God as the standard of completeness or fulness. There is all possible perfection in God. In him absolutely is fulness. All life, as we have said already, is in God, life in all its varieties. Jehovah is the living God. All wisdom is in God : he is "the only wise God."¹ All purity is in God : "God is light."² All righteousness is in God : "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty."³ All love is in God : "God is love."⁴ These several attributes are not only individually complete, but perfect in their harmony. They combine as the prismatic colours in light, and unite as the several gases which constitute the atmosphere, and they blend as the hues of the rainbow. The gods of the heathen commonly embody one prominent attribute, and the natural craving in man for communion with absolute perfection is, in this case, met by gods many. The thirst for communion with all possible perfection is, in the Christian's case, met by one God. To creatures made in God's image, and renewed in God's image, God himself must ever be the standard of completeness. Between God and all his creatures there is, we reverently acknowledge, a vast difference ; but the pitcher may be full as well as the river, and the hand may be full as well as the storehouse. There is a fulness which is as really the attribute of that which in capacity is small, as of that which in capacity is infinite. The sweet little flower, "forget-me-not," is as full of colour as the bright blue sky over its tiny head. The vine of the cottager may be as full of fruit as the vineyard of the wealthy vine-grower. The baby, which smiles on its mother's

¹ 1 Tim. i. 17.² 1 John i. 5.³ Rev. iv. 8.⁴ 1 John iv. 8.

breast, may be as full of joy as the seraph before the throne. The vast difference which exists between God's nature and ours, does not prevent that nature in some respects being a standard. The fulness of man may be as the fulness of God. God is full, and man, in his capacity, may be full as God.

Two things occur to us here : 1. The standard of completeness does not generally appear to be God, even among Christians. 2. The lack of fulness is largely traceable to the non-recognition of this standard. The standard commonly exalted is human, not divine ; it is man, not God, and usually (not invariably) men of the past. Good and great men of the present we incline to suspect, and critically to dissect. We depreciate them, perhaps because cordial appreciation would involve self-humiliation and self-censure. This is not necessarily involved in duly estimating men of the past. They are not our competitors or rivals. We can imagine their advantages to have been greater, and their hindrances to have been less. Thus have we set up dead men as the standard of completeness, instead of the living God ; and partly because of this, our incompleteness remains. According to our standard will be our aim, and according to our aim will be our attainments. This remark leads us to the *third* point presented by the text, viz :—

A degree of approximation to the divine standard now attainable. “That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” That fulness, even as the fulness of God, is within our reach, is evident, because—

1. The primitive constitution of man admits it. “God created man in his own image ; in the image of God created he him.”¹ Fulness and God are inseparable, and equally united are fulness and the image of God. There is a

¹ Genesis i. 27.

natural capacity for "fulness" in man, which has not been destroyed by the entrance of the foreign element of sin.

2. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus specially provides for this fulness. It restores lost truths and lost objects of hope and love and joy, and directly aims to fill us with all possible good.

3. The experience of every Christian is that of having supplied to him, by the Saviour, that which, being essential, has nevertheless been lacking. The Saviour of men appears to those who first come to him, as the morning star and the rising sun after the darkest of winter's nights. He appears as a rock of foundation to a builder who has utterly despaired of finding any foundation better than sand. He appears as bread to one dying with hunger, and as water to one perishing with thirst. He appears as a robe of righteousness to one whose attire is filthy rags. He appears as the friend that sticketh closer than a brother to one who is outcast and desolate. He comes as wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and those who receive him are complete in him.

4. The exceeding great and precious promises of God show, that those who lack fulness or completeness are straitened, not in God, but through themselves. All that is needful for a true Christian he can have. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"¹

And 5. The steps by which this fulness is said to be reached, are portions of ordinary Christian experience. First of all, there is the strengthening of the "inner man" by the might of the Spirit; secondly, there is the coming into the heart, and the dwelling in the heart, of Christ by faith; thirdly, there is the confirmation of all love in the

¹ Romans viii. 32.

heart ; and fourthly, the subjective knowledge of the love of Christ. The man who knows the love of Christ, and who is rooted and grounded in love, and in whom Christ dwells, and who is inwardly strengthened by the Holy Ghost, is in a position to be filled with the fulness of God. The receptive capacity of such a man is restored, while Christ and his love are in themselves fulness, and lead to a fulness distinct from themselves.

Be this then our individual concern, to be filled with the fulness of God. We are all more or less conscious of incompleteness. We lack knowledge of a particular kind, which is essential to us. We admit that there are subjects, the knowledge of which will always be above us and beyond us, and that there is knowledge which we must gradually acquire. But there is knowledge which we *can* have now, and which we need now, but which nevertheless we have not. We lack 'wisdom. There is a kind of sagacity and spiritual skill which we need for the solution of life's problems, and which is lacking to many Christians. There is an absence of emotional fire in the heart. Godly principle and true religious motive are not abundant. The divine features in the character are few and feebly traced. There is no abounding in the work of the Lord. Now, who is responsible for this? Can we charge all these deficiencies upon God? Has the redeeming God pleasure in our ignorance and foolishness and hardheartedness and emptiness and spiritual poverty? Does he with his mighty hand keep us down in the depths of spiritual destitution, or is he unable to supply all our need? The deficiencies of children are sometimes directly traceable to the wickedness and waywardness and wantonness of parents. The backwardness of pupils is sometimes traceable to the neglect of tutors and masters. The low estate of subjects is often owing to

the lack of patriotism in rulers. Is the redeeming God in any sense, and to any extent, responsible for our coming short of fulness? When did he refuse light to one who, walking in darkness, asked for light? When did he decline to give power to the faint, and strength to them that have no might? When did he shut out the prayer of one who cried to him in true hunger for righteousness? Why did God give his Son to save us? Why is the Son of God devoted to our salvation? Why is the Holy Spirit of God sent on a mission of mercy to our world? Is it not because our divinely capable nature has suffered collapse through sin, and because the true fulness has ebbed out of us, and because God seeks to open and permanently to expand our nature, and to fill us with good? Then can it be possible for us to be hindered as to fulness by anything in God? The mystery of the origin of evil scarcely exceeds the mystery of the chronic defects and faults of Christians. Be this our concern, to be filled even as the fulness of God.

Thus filled, there will be a gradual expulsion of evil—of error by truth, of vain and sinful thoughts by godly thoughts, of objects which should find no shrine in the heart by objects for which that sanctuary was made, of ungodly by godly principles. There will be a progressive displacement of lines and colouring in the character produced with evil hands, by features drawn and painted as the workmanship of God.

Thus filled even as the fulness of God, there will be a gradual contentment and satisfaction. The aching void will be unknown. The restlessness of hunger and thirst will be prevented. The varied powers and susceptibilities of our nature will be balanced and be in a state of equilibrium. Thus filled even as the fulness of God, there will be sufficiency for every good work. All the light and life

and love and power required will be possessed. The spiritual workman will not need to be ashamed. The soldier will be perfectly equipped. Thus filled even as the fulness of God, there will be restoration to original godlikeness, and the foundation will be laid of the closest possible union and fellowship with God.

Be this then our concern, for it is not only, upon all the grounds which we have named, desirable, it is also attainable. If I may be filled from the fulness of God, I can be filled even as the fulness of God; and through Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Ghost, without doubt I may be filled from the fulness of God. But let us banish for ever the idea that we can be filled as God except by God. Our nature is not one vessel, but many. It is a nature of numerous receptacles, and of many shrines and sanctuaries. It is a nature of many mouths and of many hands, each mouth opened wide, and each hand stretched out. With no one thing can such a nature be filled, and only by one Being, and that Being God. But God is accessible to us. Christ Jesus leads us into the garden where grows this tree of life, bearing all manner of fruits. He leads us to the oasis in which may be found a fountain of living water. Accursed then, and for ever accursed, be the vain and foolish things which fill us, and yet do not fill us; and welcome, and more than welcome to our nature, be the fulness of God, the fulness of his light and life and love and power and holiness and blessedness, the fulness of his goodness, in all the beauty and variety and harmony of its elements.

"That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Be this our care for each other. The New Testament, in many of its utterances, assumes that Christians do care for each other. There are not only precepts requiring this, but statements which take this for granted. As stones in

one structure, as members of one body, as of one family and household, they are assumed to care one for another. And it is further supposed that, in caring for each other, they will be anxious for the common attainment of the highest good, and for a general resurrection into the higher stages or grades of spiritual life. Thus was Paul concerned for these Ephesians, and he showed that concern by his prayer that they might be filled with the fulness of God.

The deficiencies of our fellow Christians are too often met on our part by indifference. Sometimes they are the cause of personal annoyance, and it may be, in a few cases, of a sinful satisfaction and pleasure. They who take pleasure in exposing the frailties and defects of their fellow Christians cannot be free from a satanic satisfaction in them. But perhaps the common state of mind is indifference. We see many confessed Christians dishonouring, instead of adorning, their profession. We see one fellow-disciple very logical and metaphysical and intellectual, but not spiritual. We see another very susceptible and emotional, but not intelligent and instructed. We see another very earnest and zealous, but unwise. We see another holding half truths; and for all this we do not care. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Now this is positively wrong. It is a transgression of the law of love. If the question be asked, What can I do to perfect that which is lacking? different answers may be given, according to the nature of the case and according to our circumstances; but in every instance I can pray for those who appear before me as wanting. I may be utterly unable to instruct and quicken them, but I can bow my knees at the throne of grace on their behalf, and I can pray that they may be filled even as the fulness of God. When to the eye of Jesus Christ the harvest lacked labourers, he instructed his disciples to *pray* the

Lord of the harvest to thrust them forth. Now, if prayer be the divinely prescribed means of increasing the workers in God's husbandry, it cannot fail of efficacy, when applied to supply the defects of individual spiritual life. Prayer secures the ministrations of the Holy Ghost. Prayer secures the apocalypse of Jesus Christ. Prayer roots and strengthens within us every Christian grace. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;"¹ so that prayer is one means of securing this fulness ourselves, and of leading others into the possession of it.

The incompleteness of the individual Christian is, in its measure, the incompleteness of the church, and the fulness of the individual is, in its measure, the fulness of the church. The church can never be complete, while a single Christian is short of being filled even as the fulness of God. The improvement of the church must be through the renewing of the individuals who constitute it. Now the fulness of the church is essential to the accomplishment of her mission, and the putting forth of her influence in the world. The high and separate and peculiar standing of Christian churches in the world justify large expectations from them, and these expectations can only be realized, as the fulness described in the text is attained. In seeking to attain this, there is one fact among many to which we may refer as affording encouragement. In the Holy Scriptures, God is almost always revealed in some relation to us—Creator, Saviour, Father, Protector, Leader, Benefactor. All the metaphors employed to exhibit God, are images of things which render us some service. The very attributes of God are qualities of his nature, which, for their exercise and development in this world, assume a relation with beings like ourselves. The revelation of the Son of God and of

¹ James v. 16.

the Holy Ghost is in harmony with this related revelation of Jehovah. In figure, the only-begotten Son of the Father is bread, a foundation-stone, solar light, a shepherd, and in reality, Jesus Christ is a Sacrifice and Priest and Teacher and Ruler and Advocate and Brother and Friend. In figure, the Holy Ghost is water and wind and fire and oil and rain and dew, and a voice and a seal; and in reality, the Holy Ghost is an Instructor and Comforter and Leader and Regenerator and Sanctifier. So that the nearness of God to us is such, and the points of contact and the relations are such, as to make us feel that Paul was not asking for the impossible and unattainable, when he prayed that these Ephesians might be filled, even as, and with, the fulness of God. There is a sense in which there can be no void in our nature. If not filled with truth, there must be error within us. If not filled with wisdom, there must be folly within us. If not filled with life, there must be corruption within us. The church that is not filled with God will have too much of man, and therefore of evil. The absence of love involves the presence of indifference or of hatred. The absence of holiness involves the presence of unrighteousness. Oh, for more of God within us, individually and ecclesiastically! The river at flow covers its bed, and the sea at flow covers the shore. The sun when he has risen fills every dwelling with light. God can fill us, but God alone, and when filled by God we shall be filled even as God. Every want will be met. All hunger will be satisfied, and all thirst will be slaked. There shall be no dark sanctuary in our nature. No mansion in the spiritual house shall be occupied by that which is unclean. "Out of the eater, too, shall come forth meat, and out of the strong shall come forth sweetness."¹ Filled with the

¹ Judges xiv. 14.

fulness of God, “all grace shall abound toward us, and we, always having all-sufficiency in all things, shall abound to every good work: being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, and causing thereby thanksgiving to God.”¹

The plot of the primitive temptation was, even as God, without God and in defiance of God. The plan of redemption is, by God through the Mediator, even as God. Be this, then, our prayer for ourselves and for each other, that we may be filled, even as the fulness of God, from the fulness of God.

“ Too long have I, methought, with tearful eye
Pored o'er this tangled work of mine, and mused
About each stitch awry and thread confused ;
Now will I think on what in years gone by
I heard of them that weave rare tapestry
At royal looms, and how they constant used
To work on the rough side, and still peruse
The picture pattern set above them high.

“ So will I set my copy high above,
And gaze and gaze, till on my spirit grows
Its gracious impress, till some line of love
Transferred upon my canvas faintly glows ;
Nor look too much on warp or woof, provide
He whom I work for sees their fairer side.”

¹ 2 Corinthians ix. 8, 11.

THE INHERITORS OF THE
PROMISES.

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."—PHILIPPIANS iii. 3.

SOCIAL or common worship has been the practice of professing Christians from the beginning. Public worship, worship in the presence of those who are not Christians, and worship to which such are invited, is more modern. Social worship dates with the rise of Christianity. Possessing no literal law on this subject, except a prohibition against forsaking the assembling of themselves together, and furnished by the inspired record with but a small amount of example and precedent, the disciples of Jesus Christ have nevertheless in every age met together for the worship of God, and for the administration of Christ's ordinances. This fact is explained by the social instincts and sympathies of our nature, taken in connexion with the influence of Christian doctrine and the promptings of Christian life.

In the early days of the church of Christ, Christians were charged by the heathen with atheism, and this charge was founded upon the simplicity of their worship. "They have no temples, no altars, no images, no sacred vestments, no sacrifices, no priesthood," said the pagan, "and they must

be atheists. Verily these Christians have no God." The idolater judged the Christians according to the outward appearance, and seeing that in the worship of those times, whether Jewish or Gentile, there were temples and altars, sacrifices and priests and holy garments, and that these things were absent from the worship of the Christians, we must admit that the outward appearance of things sustained the judgment of the heathen. But observe, while the heathen say of the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, "They have no God," we have, in our text, one of these disciples claiming for himself and for others the position of the only true and acceptable worshippers. "We are the circumcision, which worship God in spirit." Thus great and marked is the discrepancy in multitudes of cases between "the within" and "the without," between what men appear to be and that which they really are.

The Christians of apostolic days made great professions. Their representatives were continually saying, "We are" and "We are;" and their high professions were safe, because based upon that which they really were, and because begotten of their consciousness. Our professions are too often grounded upon the professions of others, and are indeed often born of them; hence they are frequently false, and they tend to stunt our spiritual growth. Let us adhere to the duty of Christian profession; but let us take care that our utterances are severely true.

In the passage before us we have a most honourable position claimed upon a triple basis, the position being that of the people of God with all their high advantages; and the ground of the claim, or the justification of it, being spiritual worship, the cordial appreciation of the Saviour and distrust of that which is carnal.

To "worship God in the spirit" is to worship God

as a spirit with the faculties of our own spirit and by the help of the Holy Spirit of God. To worship God in the flesh would be to worship God as though he were flesh, to worship with the powers of the body alone, and by the influence and aid of those agents which work upon the body. He who simply presents his body before the Lord, offering the closed or uplifted eyes, the words of the lips, tears and smiles, the clasped or outstretched hands and the bended knee, as though the divine nature were represented or reflected in these bodily exercises, and offering these oblations under the influence of objects which meet the eye and of sounds which fill the ear, worships God in the flesh. But we repeat, he who in worship recognises God as a spirit, and by the help of the Holy Ghost exercises his own spirit, using the body as a means of expression and of utterance, and increasing spiritual power by that which is material, worships God in the spirit. This is more than it seems, both in itself and in its revelations of the worshipper. Hence the language of the Saviour to the woman of Samaria, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him:"¹ and the words of Malachi, "For from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles: and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."²

To "rejoice in Christ Jesus" is not only to believe on him and to receive him, but gladly and gratefully to accept all his work and gifts and services, being cleansed from sin by his blood, being made righteous by his obedience, being reconciled and brought nigh to God by his mediation. The

¹ John iv. 23.

² Malachi i. 11.

true and cordial belief in Christ Jesus may be said to involve rejoicing in Christ. Hence Peter writes, "Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."¹ To believe in Jesus is to believe in a Saviour, in the God-anointed Saviour, in the Son of God, sent, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved; and this is like seeing the sun break forth after the hiding of his power through many days of summer; this is like beholding the stars at sea after days and nights of black tempest, in which neither sun nor stars have appeared; this is like seeing the haven full in view after a long and dangerous voyage; this is like the sight and kiss of his mother to a long-lost child. To believe in Christ Jesus must be to rejoice in Christ Jesus. And if we may connect this rejoicing in Christ Jesus with the worship of God in spirit, then to rejoice in Christ Jesus here means to worship, pleading his sacrifice, trusting his advocacy, relying upon his mediation, and making him in all respects our way to God.

The Apostle adds, "And have no confidence in the flesh." What he means by "the flesh" is evident by the words following: "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." The flesh, according to this light, is the administration of ordinances to the body, birth of blood—pure, high, noble blood, regard to outward religious observances, strictness in attention to them and enthusiasm in maintaining them, and external obedience to

¹ 1 Peter i. 8.

the letter of divine law. The flesh is the outward, not the inward, the material, not the spiritual. This is the flesh, and this epistolator, for himself and for his fellows, saith, "We have no confidence in it. We do not trust in it for righteousness or for salvation or for acceptance with God." Now if we connect this third qualification for being the circumcision with the first, then we say, "to have no confidence in the flesh," as it respects worship, is to use the animal and the material without abusing them, to make them secondary and subservient and subordinate; to employ as much of outward form and of material substance as are essential to spirit and life, but never to substitute mode for spirit or form for power.

These three things, then, the worship of God in the spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh, justified Paul and those whom he represented, in saying, "We are the circumcision."

What is this lofty position which Paul claims?

The practice of circumcision existed, it may be, before it was imposed on the father of the Hebrew nation, but it was ordained by God, and if not exclusively, yet mainly, with a spiritual and religious object, which object is revealed to us in the inspired narrative. Upon the election of Abraham, God promised to make him fruitful, even to the birth of nations and of kings, to give his seed the land of Canaan, to be a God to him and to his seed after him. Appointing the ordinance of circumcision and directing its administration, God said, "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised."¹ Then attaching the severest penalty to the neglect of circumcision, and speaking of him who is guilty of the omission, God

¹ Genesis xvii. 10.

declares, "He hath broken my covenant."¹ This ordinance, then, was the sign and seal of God's covenant with Abraham. It testified to God's faithfulness, and it witnessed that the circumcised had an interest in the covenant, to the keeping of which God was pledged.

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? To the circumcised pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came."² Like privileges or advantages, of which these were shadows, are possessed by such as worship God in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Let us illustrate this statement.

1. They who worship God in the spirit are the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. The worship of these worshippers reveals the fact that their Father is in heaven. They thirst for God, then God is their element; they adore God, then God is their end; they thank God, then God in their eye is the Father of all mercies; they confess to God, then God is their strong confidence; they ask of God, then God is to their hearts the fountain of good. But it was not always thus. Time was when these worshippers did not thirst for God, or praise God, or confess to God, or thank God, or pray to God; they have therefore been born again, and born of God; or if from the beginning of life they have been worshippers of God, they must be a special workmanship, for the world by wisdom knew not God.

Like seeks like, and finds like. Rivers run into the sea. Gases unimprisoned fly into the atmosphere. Dust raised by the wind falls again to the earth. And why? Rivers

¹ Genesis xvii. 14.

² Romans ix. 4, 5.

and sea are one element. The firmament is composed of gases. Dust is of the earth, earthy. In like manner the worshipper of God must be godly, and the worshipper of God who is a Spirit must be spiritual. To such pertains the adoption of sons.

2. They who rejoice in Christ Jesus behold the brightness of the Father's glory. Our Father's eternal power and Godhead are from the creation of the world clearly seen. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work."¹ Moreover, God has revealed himself in words, bright with light and warm with fire; and he has shown himself in such material manifestations as the furnace and lamp which Abraham saw, and the form at the top of the ladder connecting heaven and earth which Jacob saw, and the burning bush which Moses saw, and the pillar of cloud and of fire which Israel saw, and the supernatural light and brightness which at the dedication of the first temple Solomon saw, and all the priests saw, and which, when he went into the Holy of Holies, the High Priest saw. But these revelations and manifestations are not the glory of God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."² "We," saith John, "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."³ They who rejoice in Christ Jesus behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of his wisdom and power, the glory of his light and love.

3. They who have no confidence in the flesh are the inheritors of great and precious promises. Even the promises made to Abraham are theirs. "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be

¹ Psalm xix. 1.

² John i. 18.

³ John i. 14.

the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised;—that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.”¹ “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”² But the believer in Christ Jesus is interested in a better covenant, established upon better promises.

A country was promised Abraham, and his children inherited it. It was a good land, and large and fruitful—a land flowing with milk and honey; no flat dead level—the mountain was piled up, and the valley was spread out there; no dry and thirsty land—the early and the latter rain, and the dew of Hermon, were there; no torrid or frigid clime—summer and winter, the time of the singing of birds, and the time of the leaf-fall, were there; no barren land was this country—deserts rejoiced and wildernesses bloomed there. There was the lily with its modest beauty, the aloe with its giant foliage, the spikenard with its spear-like leaves, the juniper with its sombre boughs, and myrtles with their blooms of snow in leaves of green; there were the vine and

¹ Romans iv. 11-13, 16.

² Galatians iii. 7-9.

the fig-tree and the olive and the apple-tree and the citron and the pomegranate ; there were the oak and the palm-tree, and there were cedars of Lebanon. These flowers of the field, and these trees of the orchard and of the wood, show that for climate, fertility, and beauty, the country promised to Abraham was a goodly land. But Canaan shared in the universal curse—the trail of the serpent was over it all ; thorns and thistles were even there ; serpents and ravenous beasts were even there ; the sun smote by day and the moon smote by night ; war made desolation there ; want was there and woe ; sorrow was there and sin. But the land promised the Christian is a better country ; there shall be no more curse ; there shall be no night there ; there the flower-bloom fades not, and the fruit-tree yields every month ; there is neither biting cold nor exhausting heat ; no night, no winter, no sickness, no dying, no pain, no tears, no wretchedness, no wickedness, no tribulation, no transgression.

“ There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign ;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

“ There everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers ;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours.

“ Sweet fields, beyond the swelling flood,
Stand dressed in living green ;
So to the Jews old Canaan stood,
While Jordan rolled between.”

But we may not now speak particularly of every promise made to Abraham, nor of every privilege which belonged to those who were of the circumcision. Some of these advantages we can merely name.

It was promised Abraham that his posterity should become a great nation, and they who rejoice in Christ

Jesus are an holy nation and a peculiar people. They receive a kingdom, and one which cannot be moved, a kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

God promised Abraham to be his God, and the God of his seed after him. And "I will be a Father unto you,"¹ saith God to every man who rejoices in Christ Jesus; meaning, 'I will protect you, guide you, preserve you, and provide for you. To you will I look, with you will I dwell, you will I bless, and to you will I be a fountain of good.' "And this is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life."²

Thus they who worship God in spirit are the inheritors of great promises.

4. They who worship God in spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, are favoured with special divine revelations. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."³ And writing of the fulfilment of this word of grace, Paul testifies, "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."⁴

5. They who worship God in spirit are God's elect, and God's anointed to the highest services which creatures can render; they are a royal priesthood. An uncircumcised son of Abraham was not allowed to celebrate the ordinances, or to enjoy the privileges of the church of God; and when

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 18. ² 1 John ii. 25. ³ Heb. viii. 10, 11. ⁴ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

in times of apostacy this rite was neglected, God charged the Jews with having broken his covenant. The circumcised were clean, the uncircumcised were unclean. The circumcised were holy, the uncircumcised were unholy. "O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, in that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations."¹

But the law of God, when requiring the circumcision of the flesh, made mention of a spiritual circumcision. Thus, "Circumcise therefore your heart, and be no more stiff-necked."² "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul."³ The prophets continually deprecate spiritual uncircumcision, and as constantly enjoin spiritual circumcision. And what saith the Apostle Paul? "Neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."⁴ He who has no confidence in the flesh, and who worships God in spirit, is circumcised in heart, and serves as a priest unto God.

6. They who worship God in spirit are connected with an ancient and sacred lineage. The Jew claimed Abraham as his father, he also claimed Isaac and Jacob and all the illustrious patriarchs and prophets as his ancestors; but they, whom Paul here describes, may claim as ancestors all who have had like precious faith in every age. They may say, We have Enoch for our father, and Seth and Abel. They are allied to the goodly fellowship of the prophets,

¹ Ezek. xlv. 6, 7. ² Deut. x. 16. ³ Deut. xxx. 6. ⁴ Rom. ii. 23, 29.

and to the glorious company of the apostles, and to the noble army of martyrs, and with the holy church of the past throughout all the world. Theirs is a most ancient and saintly succession.

And 7. While of the Israelites as concerning the flesh Christ came, of those, whom Paul here describes, Christ comes as a gospel and as a revelation to the world. The Israelite gave the world the body of Jesus. Every Christian imparts the knowledge of the divine Christ. Jesus was born at Bethlehem of the Virgin Mary; but was born into the hearts of the men of Samaria by the saying of the woman, to whom the Messiah revealed himself at the well. And every Christian, who is living as he ought, may say, "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ."¹ And again, "Ye are our epistle, known and read of all men, manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ."²

Thus they who worship God in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, are privileged and distinguished. Adopted by God, favoured to behold the glory of the Lord, interested in a gracious covenant, favoured with divine revelations, admitted to the service of God, heirs of precious promises, of the lineage of the most favoured saints, heralds of the Lord Jesus, they are the favoured by heaven and the blessed of the Father of all mercies. They are called of God, and beloved of God, and elect of God, and may say, "We are the circumcision." Be this the distinct profession of all who can make it upon the basis of the text.

1. Let us claim to be the circumcision in the presence of the Jew. To him, if he rejoice not in Christ Jesus, we

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 14, 15.

² 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.

say, Your circumcision is counted noncircumcision. If we are disciples to Jesus Christ, his unbelief cuts him off from Abraham, while our faith makes Abraham our father. We are Abraham's seed, and he is the alien. We envy not his link of connexion by blood, we have a far less attractive. We envy not the remoteness of his ancestry, for we have fathers of more ancient date. If his temple stood as it is in days of yore, we should account it a desolate house, and should prefer to worship by a river side, where in the name of Jesus prayer is wont to be made. We could not worship in his ordinances. The ritual prescribed by Moses we account a worn-out garment, which God has put away. We have the substance of Levitical shadows and the reality of Levitical types. We rejoice in the day of whose dawn the star of Judaism was harbinger and herald. We honour the Jew, clad as he is in the purple and fine linen of sacred historic associations, we are grateful to him as the channel of our best religious privileges, and we honour him for Jesus' sake; but before his face we say, "We Christians are the circumcision."

3. "We are the circumcision." We claim this position as Christians of simple customs, in spite of some who would withhold it because we follow not with them. We notice the stress which such lay upon consecrated ground, upon ecclesiastical edifices, upon sacramental efficacy, upon an authorized ministry, upon uniformity and union with the one and the true church; and we ourselves bow to the law which requires decency and order in all things. But we affirm that spiritual worship consecrates any site and structure, constitutes the worshipper a priest, and renders the simplest forms full of power and of life. The purest and noblest worship may be offered under the most unpretending circumstances, and the lowest and feeblest elements of

devotion may be absent, where externals are most imposing and the order is most complete.

3. "We are the circumcision." If we worship God in spirit, be this our confession in the face of the world. And if men demand of us a style and order of worship which would undermine spirituality, divert our complacency from Christ, and foster confidence in the flesh, let us not only refuse to conform to their requirements, but let us deny that conformity would secure any increase of acceptableness or of power. Of power! What is mightier than spiritual worship? The worshipper carries his offerings to the footstool of the throne of the "I am," he presents his requests and confessions and praises before the face of our Father in heaven, and breathes the melody of his heart into the ear of the God who is love. What show of strength exceeds that manifest by rejoicing in Christ Jesus? He who thus joys has an eagle's eye and an eagle's pinion, for he can look upon the sun of suns, and mount above all mists and clouds. And is "no confidence in the flesh" loss of power? "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man who trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. He shall be like a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."¹ And is there no beauty in simplicity?

"Lord, how delightful 'tis to see,
A whole assembly worship thee."

¹ Jeremiah xvii. 5-8.

Referring to the figure of the prophet whose words we quote, a recent writer, and using two poetic figures, writes as follows —

‘Not Lebanon with all its trees
Yield thee a timber equal mine.’

The utmost in degree, and the highest in kind, of the true spiritual life and word, are to be found in an assembly composed of men who worship God in spirit, to wit in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

“We are the Circumlocution.” Let us, in good and godly fellowship with all true churches, maintain our claim to this position. But let me here remark, however, that the fullest and noblest spirituality is consistent with attention to decency and order in our common worship.

If we worship in spirit, the place in which we choose to record God’s name will be chosen according to the convenience of the worshippers, and with the repudiation of the idea that there is now either holy land or sacred mound.

‘What’s hallowed ground? Has earth a God
Its maker meant not should be trod
By man — the image of his God
Erect and free;
Uncourged by superstition’s rod
To bow the knee?’

“Peace — Love! The cherubim that join
Their spread wings o’er devotion’s shrine;
Prayer, sound in vain, and temples shine,
Where these are not!
The heart alone can make divine
Religion’s spot.”

If we worship in spirit, the structures we raise for worship will be erected and maintained without a superstitious regard for the mere edifice. To those who worship God in spirit, there is no exclusive God’s house. The house of God is our meeting place with God. If the structure be simple, and

even rude, and we meet within its walls the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the foundations become in our eyes precious stones, and the walls jasper, and the gates pearls, and the floor pure gold, as it were transparent glass, and the light like unto a stone most precious. 'I worship God there.' 'I meet my fellow Christians there.' 'I hear voices from heaven there.' 'This and that man were born there.' Such associations as these convert a barn, or a cottage, into a gorgeous temple.

By this law of association, poets see nature in works of art, works which to the dead soul would suggest no thought but of the hand and tool of the human workman.

"The moon on the east oriel shone
Through slender shafts of shapely stone
By foliated tracery combined.
Thou would'st have thought some fairy's hand
'Twixt poplars straight the osier wand
In many a freakish knot had twined ;
Then framed a spell when the work was done,
And changed the willow wreaths to stone."

Or if the house built for worship be raised by the science of the architect and by the cunning craft of various artificers ; if the structure be scientifically and artistically pure as a gem, and clear of defect as a perfect crystal, and full of harmony as the music of some great master, still the spiritual worshipper feels that "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands."† Give us space and beauty as expressive of our love for God, and for his Son Jesus Christ our Lord ; but let us ever remember that stones which must moulder, and metals which will rust, and wood which the ticking wood-worm will devour, and that a pile which is dust, never can form a dome whose span is commensurate with the out-goings of a God-quickened spirit, or whose duration represents that spirit's destiny.

† Acts vii. 48.

The temple of a Christian's worship is the universal presence of a besetting God.

If we rejoice in Christ Jesus, we shall make much of the Lord's-day, as our solemn feast-day and day of sacred assembly. That day will be a high day. We shall not forget the creation of the world, and God's ceasing to create on the seventh day; but we shall remember with deeper gladness and more fervent gratitude the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

" 'Twas great to speak a world from naught,—
" 'Twas greater to redeem."

It only remains for us to remark, that the worship in which the text is embodied is perfect worship. The worship in the upper room before Pentecost, and certainly the worship at Pentecost, was higher than the worship in the temple, and in the tabernacle, and at the primitive altar; and this worship is here described. In kind and character it cannot be surpassed even in heaven. We are imperfect, and are imperfect in worship, but there is nothing higher than worshipping God in spirit. Some things, when we grow up to Christian manhood, and when we develop that manhood in the paradise regained, we shall put away as childish things, and some things connected with worship; but spirituality, joy in Christ Jesus, and independence of the flesh, are properties of worship which shall abide in the devotions of the church of the living God, when heaven and earth have passed away.

" The holy to the holiest leads,
From thence our spirits rise;
And he that in thy statutes treads,
Shall meet thee in the skies."

XXII

“FOR MY SAKE.”

*Preached in Bristol, at the Anniversary of the Missionary Society,
September 20th, 1864, and elsewhere.*

“For my sake.”—MATTHEW v. 11.

THESE words are a fragment of a sentence. We have not, however, separated them from their context in affectation of singularity, or for any rhetorical effect; but because they contain all that we wish to present on this occasion to our audience.

“For my sake.”—These are the words of the Lord Jesus. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” “For my sake.”—There is a self-assertion here, which is justified by the character and position of the speaker. By these words he places himself as the foundation of our conduct; he fixes himself as the corner-stone of our actions; he plants himself as the goal of life. On his account we are to work and suffer and rejoice and live. Thoughts about him, and feelings awakened by such thoughts, are to be the fountains of action and the fruit-bearing trees of conduct. *He* translated our text perfectly who said, “For me to live is Christ,” and *they* rendered it correctly of whom it was written, “Whether we live, we live unto the Lord.”

Oh! how I wish that, instead of my reading these words to you, and attempting to expound them, you could hear Jesus himself say, "For my sake"! The voice would have power, the echo is feeble; the direct ray would have force and fulness, the reflection is faint. May the Spirit of all might so use the reflection, and so employ the echo, as to bring us into the presence of him who spake as never man spake, and then at the close of this service we shall say, 'Did not our heart burn within us while he revealed the end and purpose of our being, by exhorting us to labour and suffer and live for his own dear sake?'

"For my sake."—All beings capable of love and hatred and sympathy, must, if placed together, act with direct regard to each other, and they will do many things for each others' sake. This kind of action will be most abundant where close relationships exist. God acts, or abstains from acting, for man's sake, and man is active or passive for God's sake. In every family and community, those who constitute the household, or the body social or political, are found working, rejoicing, and suffering for each others' sake. Surely all action which does not arise from motives personal to the actor, springs from considerations connected with some being or beings. Is the final standard of virtue distinct and separate from the holy will of God? If so, where is it? what is it? whence is it? All that God does is right, because he is God, and that which constitutes Deity makes his will the ultimate standard of holiness. Godliness ever must be righteousness, and righteousness ever must be godliness. This subject has a wide range, but we will confine ourselves to the exact point exhibited by the text.

"For my sake."—These words are not solitary, they stand in companionship with expressions of a similar kind, found in all parts of the New Testament. Jesus Christ

speaks of his disciples as being calumniated, and taken into custody, and hated, as losing life, and having their name cast out as evil, for his sake. The apostles speak and write of striving for the Lord's sake, being fools for Christ's sake, and servants for Jesus' sake, of being delivered unto death, and taking pleasure in distresses for Christ's sake, of forgiving, suffering, and submitting to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake. Among these texts are two specially pertinent. "Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles."¹ "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted."²

These passages indicate the use we are about to make of our text. We wish to present to you the ground and the nature of Jesus Christ's claims.

"For my sake."—Who speaks to us here? John tells us of one whom he calls "the Word," who was with God, who was in the beginning, who was God, by whom all things were made, in whom was life, and whose life was the light of men: This is He made flesh. In the garden of Eden, after the failure of our first parents, the Lord God spake of a seed of the woman who should be *the* seed: This is He. When Jacob was dying, to his assembled sons he spake of Shiloh: This is He. When Moses was executing his commission as prophet of God and leader of Israel, the Lord spake of raising another prophet; and This is He. So soon as God had gathered from the nations a people to show forth his praise, he ordained a ritual in which were foreshadowings of a person who should be sacrifice and priest, atonement and mediator: This is He. During several centuries prophecy sometimes whispered, and sometimes spake loudly, of a coming person whose advent should be

¹ 3 John 7.

² Revelation ii. 3.

the event in the history of the world, the world's day-break, the world's spring time, the dawn of everlasting light, and the resurrection of everlasting life; and This is He.

"For my sake."—Who speaks thus? Eighteen centuries and more ago a child conceived by the Holy Ghost was born of a virgin. An angel announced his birth, and a multitude sang praises, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men :"¹ This is He. On the occasion of the baptism of a Galilean carpenter, "the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased :"² and This is He. During nearly four years there was known in Galilee and Samaria and Judæa, one who spake as man never spake, who wrought many wonderful works, who went about doing good, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and This is He. Not long before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews crucified a notable Nazarene; he was charged with sedition and with blasphemy, but upon the head of the cross it was written, "This is the King of the Jews ;"³ and he who saith, "For my sake," is He. Death is universal, resurrection is almost unknown; but in Palestine one rose from the dead; and This is He. We have seen multitudes carried to the grave, but who has ever witnessed an ascension to heaven? Such an ascension was seen from Olivet in the case of one Jesus; and This is He. Few men have been, in the history of the world, the subject and the object of teaching and preaching; but one being has been preached through eighteen centuries in all parts of the world; and This is He. The first preachers called him Jesus, Jesus Christ, the Holy One, the Just, the Prince of Life, the Son

¹ Luke ii. 14.

² Luke iii. 21, 22.

of God, and Jesus Christ their Lord. One apostle had visions and revelations in which this preached Jesus was presented as the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."¹ This favoured revealee once saw him "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the loins with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters; and his countenance as the sun shineth in his strength."² At another time this favoured seer saw him of whom we speak as "a lamb in the midst of the throne,"³ and again as an emperor crowned with many crowns, and wearing "on his vesture and thigh the name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords."⁴ He who here saith, "For my sake," is this preached Jesus Christ our Lord, and this revealed King of kings. Jesus is the manifested God, and he has a divine and eternal reason for saying, "For my sake." Jesus is the perfect man, and he is justified by his human superiority in the claims made by the words, "For my sake." Jesus is the Christ of God for executing the redemptive work of God, and as the Lord's anointed he may say, "For my sake." Jesus is our only Saviour from sin in all its accursed power and fruits, and as our sole Redeemer he has reason, in the service he renders us, for saying, "For my sake." Jesus is our best friend and our chief benefactor, so that his love, his gifts and services, explain and enforce the claims involved in the words, "For my sake." Jesus is our chief example, and he wins us to follow him by words like these, "For my sake." Jesus is the only Saviour of the world, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and he asserts his sovereignty and

¹ Rev. i. 8. ² Rev. i. 13-16. ³ Rev. vii. 17. ⁴ Rev. xix. 16.

familiar yet authoritative, commanding my strength for his service, and bidding me serve him from considerations personal to himself, as he iterates and reiterates the words, "For my sake," "For my sake," "For my sake."

Secondly. And what is the nature of Jesus' claims and demands? The words before us are few, but the obligations involved are exceedingly broad. Those who are expected to respond to these words are supposed to believe on Jesus, to trust him and to love him, and the claim made is for the recognition of his own worthiness, and of our personal obligations. "How much owest thou unto thy Lord?"¹ "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."² This recognition involves Jesus Christ's having a constant place in our thoughts and a supreme place in our hearts. Jesus Christ, then, dwelling in our hearts by faith, claims work for his sake, and the patient endurance of suffering for his sake, and cheerful and generous gifts for his sake, and readiness to die for his sake, and attachment to life for his sake, and cross-bearing and self-denial for his sake.

1. Jesus claims work for his sake. The idea of work is sometimes lost in the efforts which men make to remove all that is hard and irksome from labour. Real work is no light matter, it is the devotion of all that within oneself, which is required to be put forth for the attainment of a particular object. It is, in fact, the conquest of certain difficulties. There can be no work where there are no difficulties to be overcome. There may be an idle, busy, fussy doing, which is not work. Jesus Christ claims work,—the kind of work by which bread is earned and money gained, wrought for his sake; work, first of all that we may

¹ Luke xvi. 5.

² Revelation v. 12.

earn our own bread, and provide for our own house, and provide things honest in the sight of all men, and next, that we may have to give to him that needeth. Jesus Christ demands work,—the work which is involved in carrying bread to the hungry and clothes to the naked, in visiting the sick and the prisoner, the widow and the fatherless in their affliction, and in instructing and teaching all who need words of Christian knowledge and wisdom. The work which Jesus Christ claims varies in regard to different disciples, and varies according to the ability and opportunity of each. But none who are able are exempt from this claim. The disciple with one talent is as really responsible as the disciple with ten.

There is a large amount of work and activity, professing to be work and labour of love: how much of this is wrought for Jesus' sake? We have formed no judgment, we pass no judgment, we merely ask, To what extent may we hope that the work of Christians is work for Jesus' sake? I may work with my own hands selfishly, that I may have wherewith to spend extravagantly, or to hoard miserly. I may work in spheres of benevolent and religious labour for fame, for filthy lucre, for personal influence, or to please a fellow-creature; but all this is far distant from, and far below, working for Jesus' sake. The work done for Jesus' sake will, in its spirit and aim, and in all its features, be Christ-like work, and will, when finished, be acknowledged by the "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."¹

2. We owe to Jesus Christ the patient endurance of suffering for his sake. Thorough and continuous work must, sooner or later, more or less, involve suffering. The prospect of suffering should not, however, prevent our

¹ Matthew xxv. 23.

undertaking work, nor should the endurance of it lead to our abandonment of work. Christian positiveness in our character, and consistency in our conduct, will also in certain circumstances beget sorrow; "yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."¹ But the sorrows that are often incident to a sober, righteous, and godly life, should not drive us from the path of righteousness. "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me,"²—"of me," who as a child suffered as a tender plant and as a root in dry ground;—"of me," who suffered being tempted;—"of me," who suffered the contradiction of sinners and the despising and contempt of men;—"of me," who was a man of sorrows, and beyond all other sufferers acquainted with grief;—"of me," whom it pleased the Lord to bruise, to wound for transgression, to bruise for iniquity;—"of me," who was made sin for the sinful and who died for the ungodly;—"of me," the captain of salvation made perfect through sufferings;—"of me," whom it behoved to suffer as none ever have suffered or ever can suffer. Brethren, "the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord."³

3. Jesus claims cheerful and generous gifts for his sake. The gifts which he asks are according to that which we have, according to our ability and opportunity,—time, power, influence, property, and ourselves as life-sacrifices. "Give," saith he who has loved us and given himself for us. The woman who, when Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, entered the apartment in which Jesus and his fellow-guests were dining, and with unguent she had brought with her anointed his feet, understood this lesson well. Freely she had received, and as freely she gave. The offerings of

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

² Matt. x. 38.

³ Matt. x. 24, 25.

will not be the same as the very different from the offerings of the rich and the poor. The motives in the two cases are not alike indeed. Gifts for Jesus' sake will be spontaneous and free and given in recompense with the means and the ability of the donor. Great I say, although to the great and small alike they will appear to be small. Two things at least I wish giving have often arrested our attention. The offerings which the poor cast upon their own altars, and commercially small oblations, and the offerings of the rich which some rich disciples regard as their offerings. What I do not mention a third thing? the consideration of the motives on the one hand, and of the nature of the gifts on the other, is the spirit of what is called the *magnum munus*. No gift placed at the feet of Jesus seems large or small. That which is small becomes great, and that which is great becomes small by nearness to him. The small gifts expand as flowers in a midsummer noon, and the great gifts contract as the stars become pale and retire before the rising of the sun.

Jesus Christ claims attachment to life, with a readiness to die for his sake. The true martyr's spirit is the ordinary Christian spirit; but this is very different from a spirit which sprang up in the early centuries of the Christian era. Many, in the times to which we point, invited and tempted the persecutors to shed their blood, because they were ambitious of the martyr's crown. The life, which in some circumstances I should be willing to part with for Jesus' sake, I ought under other circumstances most sacredly to cherish. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."¹ The selfish

¹ Romans xiv. 7, 8.

and self-seeking martyr is never, like the Apostle Paul, in a strait betwixt two. Attracted solely by the martyr's rest and by the martyr's crown, his one desire is to depart. The consistent Christian desires that Christ may be glorified by his body, whether by life or by death. For Christ's sake we should be willing to live, and for Jesus' sake ready to die.

5. Jesus Christ claims not only work, the patient endurance of suffering, cheerful and generous gifts, the cherishment of life and readiness to die, but the devotion of ourselves to him. This is not necessarily included in the claims already named. The servant gives work, and, in some cases, suffering, and the benefactor bestows gifts and services, but the wife has yielded herself to her husband. The true Christian is a servant of Christ, but something more; a disciple, but something more; the saved by Christ, but something more; Christ betroths his redeemed to him for ever, and he claims the consecration of themselves.

"O happy day, that fixed my choice
On thee, my Saviour and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad!

"'Tis done! the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and he is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Glad to confess the voice divine.

"High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear:
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

We have considered the ground and the nature of the claims of Jesus Christ upon those whom John calls "his own." Let us now look at some of the means, by which we may stir up ourselves to recognise these claims more cordially and perfectly.

1. Distinct ideas of the person of Christ are essential to

our being moved by considerations which originate in himself. There are mysteries connected with the person of the Redeemer which no reading or thinking can remove, but there are certain facts which are perfectly simple and plain. The deity of Jesus Christ is a mystery: but what his humanity is, I know by my own consciousness and observation. The Jesus of man and the Christ of God, was true man when on this earth; and although not mere man, he is true man now that he is enthroned in the skies. The recognition of this gives distinctness to our ideas and definiteness to our purpose and aim. I cannot work and suffer for the sake of a being whose personality is a shadow. I must see a face and behold a form, if I am to live with regard to another. Religion with an absolute God is impossible. We can scarcely conceive it possible to any being, however pure and exalted, but most certainly it is impossible to us men in our low estate. The God who forbids our making any likeness of himself, himself provides us with an express image of his person. To "behold his glory" and to "consider him," to "see Jesus," is to be in a position to live for his sake.

2. As another means of aiding our devotion to Jesus Christ, we may name frequent meditation upon the service he has rendered. To secure such thoughts of the Saviour is the object of the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Thoughtlessness toward those whose service to us entitles them to influence over us, invariably prevents or checks such influence. The thoughtless child does nothing for his parent's sake. The thoughtless neighbour does nothing for his neighbour's sake. In like manner a Christian, who but seldom thinks of what he owes to his Saviour, will be but slightly moved by regard to him. The emotions follow the thoughts, and the will the emotions. We must think to feel, and feel to act. Slowly did the apostles come

to the knowledge of Christ, but when they knew him, with what power did they speak of his relations with us and of his service to us!

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."¹ "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"² "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."³ "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."⁴ "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."⁵ "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."⁶ "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."⁷ "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."⁸ "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on

¹ Rom. v. 6-11. ² Rom. viii. 32. ³ 1 Cor. i. 24. ⁴ 1 Cor. i. 30.
⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 3. ⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 20. ⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 55-57. ⁸ 2 Cor. v. 19.

a tree."¹ "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."² "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."³ "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."⁴ "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."⁵ "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."⁶ "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."⁷ "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."⁸ "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."⁹ "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."¹⁰ "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."¹¹ "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."¹² "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."¹³ "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the

¹ Gal. iii. 13. ² Gal. iii. 26. ³ Ephes. ii. 13. ⁴ Ephes. iii. 19. ⁵ Phil. ii. 5-8.

⁶ Colos. i. 14. ⁷ Colos. iii. 4. ⁸ 1 Tim. ii. 5. ⁹ Titus ii. 14. ¹⁰ Heb. ix. 28.

¹¹ Heb. xii. 2.

¹² 1 Peter i. 3.

¹³ 1 John i. 7.

Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." ¹ "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." ² "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." ³

These varied and momentous services have been either rendered in the past or are now spiritually rendered, so that for their full and cordial recognition, as well as for distinct ideas of the person of Christ, we need the communion of the Holy Ghost. To this crowning means of help we finally lead your thoughts. Very difficult indeed it is to act under the influence of regard to one whom we see not, and to one whose services are not appreciable by the senses. But that which is impossible to us alone is possible by the Holy Spirit of God. He can bestow those powers of spiritual sight by which we shall see the invisible Redeemer, and those powers of estimating spiritual good by which we shall account as our sole wealth and only treasure, the redemptive blessings which he imparts. That we may, therefore, work and suffer and live for Jesus' sake, let us seek the unbroken fellowship of the Holy Ghost, opening our minds and hearts to his suggestions and influences.

By the Holy Ghost let us re-yield ourselves as living sacrifices unto God for Jesus' sake. By the Holy Ghost let us work and labour and toil, never yielding ourselves to weariness in well-doing, but remaining steadfast and unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord for Jesus' sake. By the Holy Ghost let us endure all suffering for Jesus' sake, thus filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church.

¹ 1 John ii. 1.

² 1 John iii. 2.

³ Rev. i. 5, 6.

By the Holy Ghost let us account none of the things which we possess as our own, but let us give them bountifully for Jesus' sake. By the Holy Ghost let us be willing to live or to die for Jesus' sake, and when men, seeing this devotion, scorn and despise us, let us be willing to be accounted fools for Jesus' sake. Look at Christ, my brothers, and say,—Are these claims too great? Think of the Holy Ghost and say,—Is it impossible for us to respond to these claims? Alas! what wretched and wicked considerations sometimes move us now! How much we do for our own sake, for the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life! How much we do for man's sake, from sinful fear of men or wicked delight in human approbation! How much we do for custom's sake and for appearance sake! When shall Christ be the foundation-stone of our conduct, and the corner-stone of our activity, and the goal of our life? When will Jesus be the law of our life, and the end and purpose of our being? When? Some of us have been his disciples through many years. When? Some of us have been severely rebuked, and sorely chastened for our disloyalty to him. When? The time during which we can be influenced by him here is becoming very short. When? When we listen to him more devoutly and look at him more steadily. Listen to him now, as he saith, "For my sake." Look at him now, as he saith, "For my sake." Yield yourselves to him now, as he saith, "For my sake."

XXIII

“A LIVING SACRIFICE.”

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”—ROMANS xii. 1.

THE knowledge of Christian doctrine involves serious obligations. When we become acquainted with the truth which is revealed by Christ, we are required to bring our inner and outer life into harmony with the revelation. The truth in Jesus is not a comet, attracting attention, awakening wonder, appearing for a little time and then vanishing away; it is the sun which makes and which rules our spiritual day, and it is the moon relieving the darkness of spiritual night. The truth in Jesus is not like the pictures on the walls of our dwellings, pleasant rather than serviceable, or if useful, not essential; it is as the necessary furniture of our homes. It is not as the garnish of the dishes of a feast, it is as the viands themselves; it is not as honey to bread, but is itself bread of life. It is not an unimportant appendage to Christian character, it is that character's necessary foundation. Let us not neglect doctrine, and let us be careful to render it into action and life. The epistle before us is superlatively doctrinal and thoroughly practical, and this fact has suggested these introductory remarks, which, moreover, are sustained by the text, and especially

by the use of the word "therefore." But let us now look steadily at the text itself.

1. Here is something to be done. 2. Here is a strong motive-power by which to do it.

First. Here is something to be done. "That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." "Present"—the word here rendered "present" is elsewhere in this epistle rendered "yield." "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."¹ "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"² "As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."³ "Present your bodies,"—yield, devote, consecrate your bodies. The word is that commonly used for bringing to offer in sacrifice.⁴ "Bodies,"—a part of human nature, and the inferior part, is here used to represent the whole. Our whole nature, according to Paul, consists of body, soul, and spirit.⁵ But as the body is the visible and tangible part of our nature, the organ of practical activity, as soul and spirit cannot now be devoted to God, except as closely connected with the body, nor themselves entirely consecrated without the body, and as the body cannot be presented as a sacrifice in a state of separation from the spirit; moreover, as the allusion to the ancient sacrificial institution required the recognition of the material part of our nature, we may conclude that by "your bodies" is

¹ Rom. vi. 13.

² Rom. vi. 16.

³ Rom. vi. 19.

⁴ Luke ii. 22.

⁵ 1 Thess. v. 23.

intended "yourselves." Yield, devote, yourselves "a living sacrifice." The animal sacrifices required by the law were brought alive to the altar, and in offering them up they were slain. They were living until they became actual sacrifices, and as sacrifices they lost life. So soon as the offering was made they were dead sacrifices. The oblation was no sacrifice at all, except as the victim was slain. Yield yourselves a sacrifice in life, a sacrifice for life, a sacrifice rich in life. Shed not your blood as an offering to God, but present yourselves a living sacrifice, "holy, acceptable unto God;" yourselves, "holy," cleansed by that blood of Jesus Christ his Son which cleanseth from all sin, forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness, sanctified wholly and preserved blameless, justified freely by his grace, dead to sin, alive to God, servants to God with your fruit unto holiness,—"holy," not nominally but really, cleansed from guilt, purified; passively and actively holy,—"holy," not fictitiously but actually, not ceremonially but experimentally, not ritually but practically, not outwardly only but inwardly:—yourselves "holy" and "acceptable;" the sacrifice real, therefore acceptable; the bringing of the offering sincere, therefore acceptable; the Mediator recognised in the offering, therefore acceptable—"acceptable," *i.e.*, well-pleasing unto God. The sacrifices under the law were pleasing to God as representing certain ideas and facts, and as expressing certain sentiments; but the sacrifice before us is in itself an object of divine complacency. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."¹ "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land

¹ Psalm cxlvii. 11.

shall be married. As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."¹ "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."²

The requirement of the text is this. Bring yourselves as a life offering to God, righteous, pure, and well-pleasing in his sight. That which is here required is not "devotions," but devotion. Present your prayers and praises and confessions of sin, and bring the offerings of true worship, but in all this and beside all this and above all this, present yourselves. All that we are is required, beside that which we have. Bring money, time, and influence as offerings, but in this and beside this and above this, offer yourselves,—yourselves; your body, its senses and passions and appetites, its strength and comeliness; your soul and spirit, the mind with its faculties of understanding and reason and memory and imagination; the heart, with all its susceptibilities of love and hatred, of sorrow and joy, of hope and fear, and with all its desires and aspirations and cravings; the moral nature, with its sense of right and wrong, with the conscience and will; the religious nature, with its sense of God and of accountability; and the new man, with all that is new in the new creation and the second birth, the new man with its faith and hope and love and peace and joy and power. All that we are is required to be devoted, ourselves, our natural selves, our redeemed selves, the best in ourselves and the whole of ourselves, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable.

¹ Isaiah lxii. 4, 5.

² Mal. iii. 16, 17.

According to the text, Christians are directed to bring themselves to God, that they may *be* what he requires, his children, his servants, his witnesses, his followers, his saints, and as such, poor or rich, honoured or dishonoured, known or unknown, first or last, least or greatest, according to his will. They are directed to bring themselves to God that they may *do* what he requires, in obedience as a son, and in work as a servant, and in testimony as a witness, and in imitation as a follower, and in holiness as a saint. And they are directed to bring themselves to God, that they may suffer and submit to all that he requires, passing through the fire and walking through the rivers and being purified in the furnace, as seemeth good in his sight.

He presented his body a living sacrifice, who, when he heard the voice saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" replied, "Here am I; send me."¹ And he who, when he knew the penalty was death, "kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God."² And he who, when Jesus was revealed to him, inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"³ And above all, He of whom it is written that he said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."⁴ "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."⁵ "I lay down my life. This commandment have I received of my Father."⁶ "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."⁷ "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"⁸

To present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, is to yield ourselves to be, to do, and to suffer, all that God requires. Now there are three things necessary to this—

¹ Isaiah vi. 8.

² Dan. vi. 10.

³ Acts ix. 6.

⁴ Heb. x. 9.

⁵ John iv. 34.

⁶ John x. 17, 18.

⁷ John xvii. 4.

⁸ John xviii. 11.

1. Knowledge of God. No such sacrifice as that described in my text was ever offered to an unknown God. 2. Reconciliation to God, or redemption to God. There can be no devotion or consecration, where there is indifference or enmity or alienation. 3. Love to God. Gratitude to God and delight in God are essential to this yielding ourselves to God. They who know God, they who are redeemed to God, and they who love God because he first loved them, can present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. This is that which our text requires. Here is something to be done.

Secondly. Here is a strong motive-power by which to do it. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." The word rendered "mercies" is sometimes used to represent particularly the kindness, which is exercised and manifested in the relief of those who are in trouble. In the case before us, "the mercies of God" are the manifestations of his goodness recorded in the previous part of this epistle. By the mercies of God, that is, by "the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering,"¹ and "by the love toward us that God commends, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,"² "and by the grace that abounds much more than sin, and that reigns through righteousness unto eternal life."³ By the mercies of God, that is, by the gift of God, eternal life, by deliverance from the body of this death, by free justification and the absolute withdrawal of condemnation, by the spirit of adoption, by the calling us sons of God, and constituting us heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ. By the mercies of God, that is, by the glory which shall be revealed in us by the glorious liberty of the sons of God, by the first-fruits of the Spirit in ourselves, by the

¹ Rom. ii. 4.² Rom. v. 8.³ Rom. v. 20, 21.

good hope, by the working of all things together for good, by the not sparing his own Son but delivering him up for us all, by his readiness to give us all things, by his predestinating us, calling us, justifying us, and promising to glorify us. By the mercies of God, that is, by the love from which "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature can separate us."¹ By the mercies of God, because of him and through him and to him are all things. These were the mercies by which Paul besought the saints in Rome to present themselves living sacrifices. But there are "mercies of God" which even Paul in this epistle does not mention, mercies which the Christian shares with all men,—food and raiment, the healing of disease, the redemption of life from destruction, material mercies and temporal mercies. We all know that the mercies of God are countless in number, infinite in variety, and inestimable in value; but we forget his benefits. We write our troubles on the rock, and our mercies on the sea-shore. We do not see his benefits. We allow the channels of nature and art through which they flow to us to conceal the source. And we do not fully appreciate the benefits which we do see, and which we do remember. But every Christian will have sufficient knowledge and remembrance and appreciation of the mercies of God, to feel the force of the appeal, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." Gratitude is a strong motive-power, by whose aid we may present our bodies an offering for life, holy and acceptable.

And is there not some force in the statement that this offering ourselves as a sacrifice to God is a reasonable service? The victims under the law were material, irrational,

¹ Romans viii. 38, 39.

unconscious sacrifices, but the Christian who offers himself to God is a spiritual, rational, and conscious offering. This yielding ourselves to God is a reasonable service—

1. Because worthy of our nature and constitution as rational beings. 2. Because in harmony with the object of man's creation. 3. Because it is the natural fruit of our redemption to God. 4. Because it is a meet and right acknowledgment of our obligations to God. 5. Because it commends itself to our judgment and conscience and heart. And 6. Because while involving thorough enthusiasm, it is far from all fanaticism and superstition. In the fact that this yielding ourselves to God is in the highest sense rational, we have another motive to do it.

And is there not something due to the earnestness of Paul in this matter? "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This man knew what it was to offer himself a sacrifice to God. He did it daily, binding the offering as with cords to the horns of the altar. He wrote of that which he himself was and did, and with which therefore he was perfectly acquainted. And this man did what he recommends, by powers and aids within reach of all Christians,—not as an apostle, not as an inspired man, not as a worker of miracles, not as one supernaturally endowed, not by aids and helps beyond the reach of ordinary believers, but as a private Christian, by aid accessible to all, he presented his own body a living sacrifice. Here lies the secret of his power: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."¹ "I can do

¹ 2 Corinthians xii. 9.

all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."¹ Moreover, this man understood the difficulty of offering himself constantly to God. He had often said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?"² "He found a law in his members warring against the law of his mind."³ He knew of temptations to live to himself, and to mind earthly things. He understood that obedience to the text is hard, and exceedingly hard, and yet he beseeches that it be done. Beside all this, Saul understood above many the exceeding riches of God's grace, and the relation of all Christians to this wealth of divine love. And he saw the importance of devotion to God in its influence on others. We say, then, that although the motives of which we have spoken far exceed that we now name, there is a force, to which we ought to yield, in the earnestness with which Paul urges this duty of complete consecration. But let me keep in the foreground the chief motive-power—the mercies of God. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God."

My text, as you will have seen, describes true Christian life, and it represents the common obligations of Christians. May I urge you to live this life, and to acknowledge these obligations? Brethren, every day offer yourselves to God a living sacrifice. Christian brethren, you call one master who offered himself without spot to God, and ye are not your own, but bought with a price. In daily work, in daily worship, in daily endurance of sorrow, in doing good to all men, in teaching Jesus Christ, yield yourselves unto God.

Young brethren, do try and render my text into experience and life. Anything less than being a living sacrifice is below true godliness, and unworthy of your position as redeemed unto God. The being a living sacrifice is no work of supererogation. Be this at once. The convent and the

¹ Phil. iv. 13.

² Rom. vii. 24.

³ Rom. vii. 23.

monastery are not necessary for such a life. In the school, in the home, in the place of business, you may present yourselves living sacrifices. Say not, 'This is too high for me,' or, 'It is too difficult for me.' Wait on the Lord, and you shall mount as on the wings of an eagle. Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, and all things shall be possible unto you. The religious habits you now form are of immense moment to you. Let them be right habits even from the beginning.

Lukewarm and backsliding brethren, let me beseech you to consider my text. It shows you what you ought to be and indirectly it reveals that which you are. A sacrifice it may be, but to self, to pride, vanity, covetousness, sensuality, love of money, delight in applause. A sacrifice it may be, but to pleasures, business, fashion, society, the present evil world. A sacrifice it may be, but to orthodoxy as your doxy, to the spread of a denomination, and the advancement of a sect, and the building up of a particular church. A sacrifice it may be, but to delusion and self-deception, and to a form of godliness without the power. Can you be at ease in your lukewarmness, or at rest in your backsliding? If my text describe true Christian life, what must your life be? Think of this. A permanent mistake as to your religious state is a *fatal* error.

False brethren, if such there be before me, why do you creep into our churches, and identify yourselves with our fellowship, our worship, and our work? You are as wood, hay, and stubble in our spiritual building. You are a cancerous growth on the body of Christ. You are goats among the sheep. You are tares among the wheat. You are an offence and a stumbling-block between the church and the world. Why do you not leave Christians alone? Why, so far as you are concerned, do you turn an assembly

for worship into a religious masquerade? and a society for religious objects into a fraud and a sham? and associations for doing good into confederations for mischief? If you be an infidel, be honest, and do not profess to be a Christian. If you be a sceptic, be honest, and do not profess to be a Christian. Whatever you be, if you be not a Christian, be honest, and for human nature's sake make no religious profession. It is cruel, mean, and unmanly in you to cause men to blaspheme our Saviour, and to speak evil of true Christians. Go to your own company, and return to your own place; but know that there is forgiveness for your falseness, pardon for the dishonour you have brought upon the name of one who is worthy of all praise, and for the injury inflicted on the feelings and reputation of your fellow-men, if you repent and turn from your evil ways.

And let the Pharisees of doctrine and of ritual read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest my text. Whatever importance may lawfully be attached to clear thinking, and logical accuracy, and exact definitions, and a precise creed, observe that God claims not your intellect merely, but yourselves, a living sacrifice. Theory without practice, doctrine without duty, a creed without spiritual life, will avail you nothing. As well look to the beams of the moon for what is wrought by the rays of the sun, as to expect doctrinal accuracy to take the place of a consecrated life. And whatever importance belongs to doing all things associated with church life decently and in order, observe that God asks for, not architecture, not music, not floral decorations, not gorgeous and symbolic vestments, but yourselves, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.

There are four words in my text which I wish to leave written on your minds: "God," "mercies," "yourselves," "sacrifice."

"God:" it is he that hath made us, and it is he alone who is from everlasting; God, the only good, the eternal light, and the infinite love; God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father by him; God, the redeeming God, the God of salvation; God, our God, our own God.

"The mercies of God." These bright flowers in the field of common life; these choice plants in the garden of our family life; these fruitful trees in the orchard of our church life; these gracious gems in the cabinet of our personal and private life; these prismatic colours constituting the pure light of life; these sunbeams creating life's day and making life's summer. These riches of God's grace.

"Your bodies," yourselves, your "tripartite" nature, so wondrously made; yourselves, the offspring of God, and by faith in Christ Jesus, in a second and higher sense, the children of God; yourselves, on whom is sprinkled the blood of atonement, and in whom dwells the Holy Spirit of the living God; yourselves, your conscious selves, yourselves as saved, and your whole selves.

"Living sacrifices." Victims not slain but bound to the altar, oblations self-sacrificed, offerings self-devoted, sacrifices conscious of being sacrifices. "God," "mercies," "yourselves," "sacrifices." Take these four words and bind them together: God and yourselves, mercies and sacrifice. God comes to you in his mercies—do you meet him in sacrifice. Every day and in every thing bring yourselves as an offering to God. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. God is the Lord, who hath showed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.

XXIV

DESIRE FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

"Father, glorify thy name."—JOHN xii. 28.

THE "name" of God is any manifestation of God. The sacred writers call the titles, the inspired verbal descriptions of God, the wonderful deeds, and the renown of God, his name. And the words, "the name of God," are sometimes used, not to denote the divine titles or descriptions of God, the works of God, or his renown, but God himself. This is the case in the passage before us; "Father, glorify thy name," signifies, 'Father, glorify thyself.'

To glorify is to render conspicuous and illustrious. It is not only to make an object manifest, but to produce such a manifestation as shall attract attention, awaken reverence or admiration, create renown, and call forth praise. When a being glorifies himself, he shows himself, and so adapts the development as that others may see him, seeing, admire or honour him, and under the impulse of such emotions, speak well of his name.

"Father, glorify thy name," means, Manifest thyself, be seen, be heard, be felt, let thy power be displayed, let thy goodness be revealed, attract to thyself attention, create for

thyself praise. But some may ask, 'Will not, must not God glorify his name?' We answer, Certainly; God of necessity will hallow his name; nor can we see the connexion between our prayer for the glory of God and God glorifying himself. This incapacity, however, is only our general inability to discover the meeting-point between all agencies and the Great Worker, between the purpose of God and the activity of man.

We will consider these words, *first*, as expressing the heart's desire of Jesus Christ; and, *secondly*, as representing the aspiration of all whom he saves and guides.

Our Lord Jesus Christ spake these words as a Son and a man, in the following circumstances. He had been looking steadfastly at his approaching agony and crucifixion, and he had spoken to his apostles upon this subject more plainly than heretofore. He has come to Jerusalem that he may be ready to be delivered into the hands of men, to be crucified. At the utmost it is within five days of his decease, and he is standing (it may be in the court of the Temple) with his disciples and some others gathered round him. Philip is in the company, and he is beckoned away, that he may speak to certain Greeks who are asking for him. Philip goes to them, and they say, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip returns and consults Andrew. They agree to tell Jesus. They do tell him, and Jesus, looking forward to the time when the world should ask for him, observes, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." Then, recurring to the cross which he must carry before he can wear his crown, he remarks, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Thinking of his disciples, and of their share in his humiliation and suffering, he observes, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his

life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour." The thoughts of the Saviour revert to himself and to his immediate prospects, recalled, perhaps, by the fountains of sorrow within him being opened, and by a flood of trouble rising and overflowing his soul. He acknowledges his deep and poignant grief. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? (Shall I say,) Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name."

There had been several crises in the life of Jesus Christ. The first occurred when he was but twelve years of age. The law of God required that all the male Jews, from twelve years old and upward, should appear three times a year in the Temple at Jerusalem.¹ And to the next occurring Pass-over, after Jesus Christ had completed his twelfth year, he was taken by his parents. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem, it has been observed, would be regarded by the Jewish boys as a pleasant holiday, full of the wonder of travel, the freshness of novelty, the pleasure of extended social intercourse, and the excitement of scenes and ceremonies peculiar to the paschal season and to the holy city. The attraction to the son of Joseph was not, however, the hills that were round about Jerusalem, or the manner of stones and buildings which were enclosed in the city itself, or the gay and crowded street, neither the social entertainment, but that quiet spot in the Temple court where sacred history was recited, and divine prophecy explained. And so absorbed did the child Jesus become in converse with the learned in sacred lore, that the Nazareth caravan started without him, and he seems to have been aroused from his absorption by the

¹ Deuteronomy xvi. 16.

expostulation, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." His reply intimates that he had expected to be set free from paternal restraint, and to follow a prophet's mission, while yet, like Jeremiah, only in his teens: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" It is, however, revealed to him that he must continue as a child at Nazareth, and with deep meaning it is recorded, "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."¹ Judæa is more attractive than Galilee, and Jerusalem more interesting than Nazareth, and the scenes of the Temple more in unison with his spirit than the workshop, and the doctors more congenial companions than the Nazarenes, and the evolving of truth more in harmony with his spirit than agricultural carpentry, and the immediate entrance upon his mission more in accord with his conscious power than delay; but if there were hesitation, it was only for a moment; gracefully, as the moon falls back behind a cloud, silently and sweetly, as the star of the morning, still bright and beautiful, retires before the rising sun, so Jesus, having felt his spiritual power and realized his divine destiny, went back to the oblivion of Nazareth until the time of his showing unto Israel, saying in his cheerful retirement, 'I am willing to be concealed and unknown.' "Father, glorify thy name."

Some eighteen years later Jesus Christ passed another crisis. What happened between these two crises we are all curious to know, but we have not been informed. Jesus has just been baptized by John, and God has rent the heavens and acknowledged him. The Spirit has descended upon him like a dove, and he is full of the Holy Ghost. He is now led by the Spirit into the

¹ Luke ii. 48, 49, 51.

wilderness, and there tempted of the devil forty days. He is urged to relieve the hunger imposed on him for a season by the will of his Father, and to work a miracle for that relief. He is enticed to do homage to the Spirit of Evil, and universal temporal dominion is offered as a bribe. He is tempted to presume upon his own destiny, and upon the protection of divine providence, and for self-magnification to expose himself to useless danger. This was temptation, real trial, positive probation. He was tried as the sapling by the wind, and as the ship by the storm, and as the vessel of clay by the stroke of the potter, and as gold by fire. And the result shows that Jesus Christ was characterized by that perfection which consists in perfect love to God; for in the words, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God," "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,"¹ we see the glorious sentiment of the text triumphant, and stronger than all other voices, we hear Jesus saying in each temptation, "Father, glorify thy name."

There would appear to have been two other crises before "the last hour;" when the people would take him by force to make him a king, and he departed to a mountain by himself alone; and when realizing in all its force that he was despised and rejected of men, and when besought to spare himself an ignominious death, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. These, however, we merely name.

Life should be measured, not so much by its time-duration as by its incidents, and judged by this standard, the life of Jesus on earth was long; the early period of the first crisis, and the rapid succession of crises after the temptation, being illustrations.

¹ Luke iv. 4, 8, 12.

Our text brings us to the last and to the chief crisis, which Jesus calls "*the hour*," and "*this hour*." This was not only a crisis, and the greatest crisis, but the crisis of all former crises. He had been born for this hour. To this hour—the hour of his agony and death—all the hours of his past life had tended. He had suffered before, but now his soul was to become exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. He had often sweat the sweat of toil, but now he is to sweat the sweat of agony. He had been despised by men, but now he is to be crucified as a malefactor. He had been deeply grieved by man, but now he is to be wounded and bruised by God. Men had often hid their faces from him, but now God will forsake him. He has lived acquainted with grief, but now he is to die of a broken heart. This hour was *the hour* of Christ's life, *the hour* of the hours of his sorrow, *the hour* in the earth's history, to which the finger of time had pointed since the day in which man fell, and *the hour* upon whose events rested the performance of God's chief promises, the fulfilment of centuries of prophecy, the realization of divine symbols, and the salvation of the world. Knowing all that hung upon that hour, and already tasting the sorrow he was to endure, his soul was troubled, fear agitated him, perplexity obscured his spiritual vision. He reeled and staggered beneath his burden, and he cried, "Now is my soul troubled." "Troubled,"—never has that word represented sorrow so deep and broad either before or since. "And what shall I say? Father save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." Thou didst say by thy prophets that the Messiah should be wounded for transgression: is this trouble in my soul thy wounding? Although I be thine only son, spare me not: "Father, glorify thy name." Thou didst move men

to foretell what death I should die : let none of these words fall to the ground, let me fulfil them to the jot and tittle : "Father, glorify thy name." Here am I, ready to live, to die, to endure, to sink, to be, or not to be. Think not of sparing me, consider thyself only, and "glorify thy name." And thus perplexity did not crush Christ, fear did not enervate Christ ; but emerging from the cloud which for a moment obscured the cheerfulness of his endurance, and rising above the crisis which for a moment detained him and threatened to drag him down, he proved that his ruling passion, strong even in death, is best expressed in the cry, "Father, glorify thy name." The prayer of *the* hour had been the prayer of every hour, the cry of his agony had been the thirst of his joy, the aspiration of his last days had been his heart's desire through life, the desire at the crisis had been his aim in every step. "Father, glorify thy name." This is the language of a perfect son, of love with all the heart and soul, of filial affection culminating in self-annihilation. Could God's Son say more ? To be consistent with all that was within him, he could not say less. Could he say more ?

The craving of sinfulness is for self-glorification. Selfishness saith, 'Glorify me, glorify me ;' 'May providence glorify me ;' 'May my fellow-men glorify me ;' 'May all that I am and have glorify me.' Like a horse-leech, the element of sinfulness, with its many sons and daughters, cries, 'Give,' 'Give me,' 'Give me glory.' For God to desire his own glory first, is right ; he is first. For God to seek his own glory supremely, is right ; he is supreme. But for any other being to do it, is sinful, for God alone is supreme. "Ye shall be as gods," said the tempter ; to desire this is lust, and to attempt to reach this is to fall. But as the craving of sinfulness is for self-glorification, so the thirst of godliness is for

the glory of God. He who sees God's name and comprehends it, hears God's name and understands it, looks at it and reads it, listens to God's name and rejoices in it, and sees in his own part of God's name, will ever cry, "Father, glorify thy name." And as those whom Jesus Christ leads and governs are saved from sin, and are taught to live according to godliness, this is the aspiration of their life. We may look upon the text, therefore, as expressing the desire of all whom Jesus Christ teaches and guides.

Jesus Christ shows us the Father. He is himself a name, the name of God. He is God manifest, God manifest in flesh. And instead of being equal only to other names of God, he, as God's name, is above every name. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."¹ All therefore who have seen Jesus Christ have seen the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."²

Jesus Christ reconciles us to the Father. The basis of this reconciliation is laid in his atonement, and the reconciliation is effected by revealing the Fatherhood of Jehovah in all its reality, and the love of the Father in its length and breadth, by removing the only cause we have to dread God, by showing us that the Father sent his Son to take the cause of punishment away, and by a quickening influence upon our whole spirit, through which he makes us not only conscious of God, but conscious of the love of God,—an influence so vital and general that, in being reconciled, we are born again.

Jesus Christ not only shows us the Father and reconciles us to the Father, but teaches us to seek his glory as the end

¹ John i. 18.

² John xiv. 9.

of life and of salvation. He has taught us to pray; and what is the first petition he has put upon our lips? We want daily bread, is it that? We want forgiveness, is it that? We want protection in temptation and deliverance from actual evil, is it that? No. It is not for ourselves that we are taught to prefer our first petition, neither for our fellow-men. "When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." And the second and third petitions are in harmony with the first, "Thy kingdom come." "Thy will be done as in heaven, so on earth."¹ The doctrines Jesus Christ taught harmonize with this lesson upon prayer. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment,"² and the lessons taught by Jesus Christ's example are of the same character. He was justified in saying, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."³ So that the aspiration of the disciple of Jesus Christ will ever be, "Father, glorify thy name," and in the degree that his discipleship is real and close, this desire will be intense and constant.

If "Father, glorify thy name," be the supreme desire of the individual disciple, it will be the prayer of the churches of the Saviour; that is, in the degree of their purity and life. If there be any Diotrefes who loveth to have the pre-eminence, he will try to make his own name conspicuous and illustrious. And among the real disciples, when in hours of forgetfulness and days of declension they strive who shall be the greatest, there will be too loud and too frequent mention of the names of the disciples themselves. But where such evils exist, there must be false brethren in the churches, and the true brethren must be

¹ Luke xi. 2.² Matt. xxii. 37, 38.³ John xvii. 4.

following *Deuteronomy* 10: "Except to pray for himself and to give thanks for himself who can mention himself, when near the Son of God?" To the extent that the churches of Christ are pure and holy, the prayer will be heard, frequent and fervent. "Father, glorify thy name." But when all, by Jesus Christ's teaching and leading, shall know God, this will be the prayer of all—the prayer of all, from the least to the greatest. From the child at his play and from the youth at his study, from the mother at home and from the father at his daily labour, from the husbandman at the plough and from the merchant on 'Change, from the artificer in his handicraft and from the trader in the house of traffic, from the man of letters at his books and from the man of science in his researches, from the magistrate and the judge, from the senator and the prince, from the minister of state and from the monarch, from the unit and the million, from the individual and the race, shall arise this supreme aspiration. "Father, glorify thy name." If when that day shall dawn you stand at the door of the closet, you will hear it there; if you stop by the threshold of the home, you will hear it there; if you walk over the fields, you will hear it there; if you enter the house of business, you will hear it there. In studio and study, in factory and church, in peasant's cot and palace, in every place of work and recreation and association, you will hear, "*Father, glorify thy name,*" "*Father, glorify thy name,*" "*Father, glorify thy name.*" And the voices of infancy, maturity, and age, of men of every character and clime, shall blend in a harmony so sweet and perfect and full, that this prayer of earth shall appear as an accompaniment to the praises of heaven, and while the seraphs cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty," and the innumerable choir of angels sing, "Glory be to God most high," the distant voices of earth

shall be heard, softly but sweetly saying, "Father, glorify thy name." "Father, glorify thy name."

Men say there will be no prayer in heaven. We shall not ask for bread, for we shall hunger no more. We shall not ask for pardon, for forgiveness will be full and complete. We shall not ask protection, for we shall be safe and know that we are safe. We shall not ask deliverance from evil, for from all evil we shall be saved. But as we behold the glory of God concentrated there, and get to know that power and goodness are pent up in the divine nature, we think that we may sometimes come to the footstool of Jehovah, and say, 'Spread this glory more abundantly over thy wide world, be not a God hiding thyself, create new worlds, make thy presence more visible, and thy resources more manifest. "Father, glorify thy name."' Of one thing we are certain: to desire this is to be meet for heaven, and to realize it with gladness and gratitude is to be in heaven.

All whom Jesus Christ leads and saves, have learned to say, "Father, glorify thy name."

But, brethren, our text shall not be a mere theme of meditation. We will use it for correction, reproof, and for instruction in righteousness. And, *first*, let us employ this text for self-examination. Jesus Christ said, at the crisis of his life, and at every crisis, always said, said about everything, "Father, glorify thy name." What have we said? What do we say? Have we not sometimes remained in Jerusalem to glorify our own name, instead of going to Nazareth to glorify our Father's name? Have we not tried to turn stones into bread to show what in an extremity we could do, instead of permitting God to sustain us in extremity, and to glorify his name? Have we not fallen down and worshipped the devil, in the homage we have

paid to the talents of ungodly men, to money and secular power, to power of all kinds unallied with piety, and thus prevented our being able to say, "I have glorified thy name"? Have we not incurred great and fearful dangers, under temptations to show our security ostentatiously, when only as we have kept within the posts of duty we could safely and honestly say, "Father, glorify thy name"? And when we have come to hours of life—hours that stand out from all other hours, hours so dark that that darkness is still felt, hours so cold that we shiver as we remember them, hours so long that years seemed enclosed in them, hours so critical that we tremble as we recall them, hours so sad that they left whiteness upon our hair and furrows upon our cheek, hours so peculiar that we call them, *the hour*,—when we have come, we say, to such hours, what has been our prayer? Passionately we have said, 'Lord, let there be light;' peevishly we have cried, 'Who can stand before this cold?' chidingly we have complained, 'Why tarriest thou?' murmuringly we have asked, 'Why am I thus?' Often have we said, "Father, save me from this hour;" and but too seldom and too feebly, "Father, glorify thy name." And in our households, have we not been more anxious to make a name, or to keep a name, than that God in our children should glorify his name? If we turn to our church-life, there is the same coming short of pursuing the glory of God. The name of the pastor, and the name of the church, and the name of the sect, and the name of the denomination, are sometimes put so forward as to hide God's name. Is God our Father recognised as above all, and through all, and in all? Are not architecture and music, appearance and effect, numbers and renown, considered more than the glory of God's name? We are verily guilty: we are convinced of sin: we have left undone that

which we ought to have done : Father, forgive us : cleanse us from ungodliness, and in the sanctuary and its services, in the service of song and in the service of praise, in our ministers and their ministries, "Father, glorify thy name."

Secondly. Let us seek the state of heart which the prayer expresses, and making the prayer our own, let us embody its spirit in our whole life. Be not much concerned about the length of your life, or the circumstances of your death. Cherish life as God's gift, and as precious to others, if not to yourself ; be willing to be absent from the body, and acknowledge that to be with Christ would be far better ; make known every request upon this matter to God ; but leaving yourself in God's hand, submit to his arrangement, saying, "Father, glorify thy name." Preserve your health, and when sickness comes, use all lawful means to remove it ; still, be willing to be blind, deaf, dumb, palsied, leprous, if, by your enduring such afflictions, God seeks to glorify his name. And when God arrests the onward course of your business, puts wings to your wealth, leads out of your sight into an upper mansion of his house those you dearly love, do not say, 'I can never conduct a second-rate business,' 'I can never endure poverty,' 'I cannot live if such an one die ;' but try to say, "Father, glorify thy name." And when your friends and acquaintance urge you to try to make to yourself a name, when they speak of what you have made yourself more loudly than of what God has made you, and of what you have done for yourself more often than of the grace of God by which you are what you are, go and write the name of the Lord over your own name, go and make mention of the Lord wherever they have named you, that if you cannot cause God's name to be seen and God's name to be heard, you may at least render their inscriptions illegible and confound

their speech. And when in your church-life you feel that another style of architecture, better music, and other modes of worship, and new courses of action, will glorify God, get them, adopt them; glorify no custom, glorify no precedents, glorify no usage, glorify no ancestors, glorify no sect, glorify no church; but by all needful changes cry, "Father, glorify thy name." Yet if scientific and artistic structures, and particular modes of worship, come to signify some proud doctrine, and to show undue esteem for earthly and outward things, let us return to the barn or to the open air, let us break up our instruments of music, let us go back to the most rigid simplicity, saying, as we demolish each net and snare and trap, "Father, glorify thy name."

At all times and in all places, in all scenes and pursuits and conditions, let us try to learn to say, "Father, glorify thy name." "Learn?" did I say, "learn?" When shall we learn this lesson? where? and of whom? When? When we are willing to learn it; a teacher is not wanted, but pupils; more teaching is not required, but more attention. When? Whenever we will take the lesson. Where? First in Nazareth, in seclusion, in retirement, away from social refinement and religious show; in Nazareth, where the divine teacher would bring you up. Where? If you miss Nazareth, in the wilderness, by the discipline which inspires self-control, and by the trials which shut you out from man, and which shut you up to God. Where? In sight of some Gethsemane, in view of some Calvary, in prospect of suffering which you dare not refuse, but which you tremble to taste. Where? Where Christ practised these lessons, we have to learn them. Blessed be God! they may be learned somewhere. Of whom? I might mention patriarchs and prophets, apostles and the noble army of martyrs. I might speak of saints in ancient

days, and of living men and women now to be found in the holy church throughout all the world ; but a greater teacher is here, in him who *first* said, "Father, glorify thy name." He can teach us ; let us place ourselves at his feet. He is waiting to instruct us ; let us try to learn of him. If slow to learn by reason of weakness, he will pity us ; if we need line upon line, he will give it us ; if we are tempted to neglect his teaching, and strive to conquer the temptation, he will sympathize with us ; when we fail in our practice, he will secure our forgiveness ; and if willing to learn, and to learn of him, we *shall* learn. Oftener we shall say, "Father, glorify thy name ;" louder we shall say, "Father, glorify thy name ;" until our heart's desire and our ruling passion shall find utterance in no other words than, "Father, glorify thy name." Then, how divine the peace which shall keep the heart and mind, and how godlike the rest which shall possess our soul ! All that is within us shall be in sweet accord, the intellect and the heart, the reason and the passions. Our eye will be single, and our whole body full of light. With many things to do, at but one thing shall we aim. With many impulses, one great principle shall govern our will. We are far from all this now, but the thunder of the highest heavens finds echoes in the lowest hills, and the sun, which first gilds the mountain tops, spreads at length his beams over the valley, illuminating the meanest flower, and making the very dust of the earth to glitter. And thus, although we be far below the spirit of our text at present, we may hope by grace to help us, derived from our Saviour, to say one day, as he said, "Father, glorify thy name."

"MARRIED TO HIS MEMORY."

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."—ROMANS vii. 4.

WHEN the negroes of the Southern States of America were set free, they were, in very many cases at least, placed in a position of deep poverty and of abject helplessness. Moreover, they were found to be sadly ignorant. Sickness and death followed hard upon indigence, and the condition of the larger portion of the freedmen was miserable even to the extreme. Their cry reached the ears of many in the Northern States, who had hearts to sympathize and means to help. To a newly-discovered gold-digging there is what is called a "rush." By so much that a man is better than gold, or as Jesus Christ puts it, better than a sheep, we might expect a still greater rush to this scene of want and woe. But the lesson has not yet been learned, that there is nothing on this earth so precious as man. One man outweighs a planet. Some Americans felt this, and went down South to minister to the sick and dying emancipated slaves. Amongst those who left their homes on this errand of mercy, there were men and women of education, refinement, social position, and wealth. Now,

one of these, soon after commencing his arduous work, sickened and died. When tidings of his illness reached his parents, they left their home to minister to their sick son, and were accompanied by a lady to whom their child was betrothed. The sickness was unto death, and before the parents and their companion in travel could reach the bed of affliction, its occupant had died. Arrangements were made to convey the body to the family sepulchre in the North. But many who had been fed and clothed and instructed and comforted by their deceased friend, entreated that his dust might be allowed to sleep in the scene of his generous labours, and in a burying-place which they could visit, and in which their own bones would probably lie. The mother consented, and the father; but the consent of another was necessary. Could any wonder if it was but tardily given? At length the betrothed lady gave her cordial assent, declaring that she would live where her elect husband had died, and by devoting herself to his work, would be married to his memory. Married to his memory! She would visit his grave, she would work out his plans, she would accomplish his half-finished projects, she would sustain the mention of his name, she would speak of his deeds, she would live his life.

More than eighteen centuries and a half ago, the Son of God came from heaven to our earth. He was God-man, man-God, Immanuel, God with us. He was a holy child. He was a holy man, undefiled, harmless, and separate from sinners. He went about doing good. He himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses; he was wounded for our transgressions. He bare our sins in his own body on the tree; he was once offered to bear the sins of many. He was crucified and was buried; on the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven.

All this happened eighteen centuries ago. But God moved certain men, who were eye-witnesses from the beginning, to take in hand to set forth in order all these things. And there is a remembrance of these things by the writings of the evangelists and apostles. They are past, all past, long since past, but may be present, are present, if they are remembered. By testimony, the Jesus Christ of the past is with us. Let us be married to his memory.

Through testimony we made the acquaintance of this Jesus some time ago. In some cases our mother introduced us to him. She first named his name to us; she first told us the sacred story of his life. Or our father made him known to us. He led us to Bethlehem and Nazareth and Jerusalem and Gethsemane and Calvary and Olivet. In other cases, our tutor and teacher pointed him out to us. Turning our faces round towards the distant past, the teacher said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which hath taken away the sin of the world.' In other cases, the preacher proclaimed him to us. We listened to one who preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and knowledge of Jesus came by hearing. Or, one who loved him—not our mother or father, not a teacher or preacher—said to us, 'Know Jesus Christ.' Or we found him as the Ethiopian eunuch found him, as we read the holy books in which his name is recorded, and in which his life is written and his character unfolded. In every case, the Holy Spirit of the living God revealed him. He made our mother's character a polished mirror, in which we saw her Saviour's face. He made our father's instruction a lamp, by which we traced our Saviour's steps. He made other teaching and preaching a bright light, by which the features of Jesus' character were fully shown. And we have something to remember. Let us be married to the memory of the Son

of God, who came down from heaven, of him who "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself to become obedient to death, even the death of the cross."¹

The birth at Bethlehem is a thing of the past, and the bringing up at Nazareth, and the showing unto Israel in the villages and towns and cities of Galilee, Samaria, and Judæa. The teaching and the working of miracles are things of the past, and the agony, and crucifixion, and burial, and resurrection, and ascension. These things can only be memories, sacred memories. The Jesus born, the child Jesus, the Jesus living on this earth, the crucified Jesus, the buried Jesus, must be recollections. Let us be married to his memory—

1. By frequently thinking of all that he was, and did, and suffered, while he was here. Alas! this thinking! How neglected, and feeble, and inefficient! We cannot visit Bethlehem, but we can think of it; we cannot visit Nazareth, but we can think of it; we cannot visit Calvary, but we can think of it.

2. By cherishing emotions and affections corresponding with such thoughts. Thus thinking, gratitude and love will spring up in our hearts, like plants raised from seed, which pierce the cold and heavy earth, and come up into the air and light. Let us cherish these plants. They need protection from frosts and winds, which may destroy them; they need a soil which can feed their life; they need training, lest they trail and die.

3. By contentedly living on this earth so long as we have a work of God to do. Jesus Christ came here from heaven, and has returned to heaven. He came to this world, and remained until his work was finished. We are here with a

¹ *Philippians* ii. 7, 8.

work to do. His memory seems to say, Pray not to be taken out of the world, but ask for help to work and to complete your work, as he wrought and finished his.

4. By working, so far as we can, the works he wrought. He healed, and we may be great healers. He comforted, and the weakest may be a son of consolation. He instructed, and all who have religious knowledge, of which some others are destitute, may instruct. He made peace, and a little child may be a peace-maker.

5. By intelligently and devoutly observing the ordinance of remembrance which he founded. "The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread : and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat : this is my body, which is broken for you : this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood : this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." Let us not neglect this most blessed sacrament of the body and blood of Christ.

Thus let us be married to the memory of him, who lived and loved and gave himself for us.

He who died for us is not here, but is risen, as he said. Death hath no more dominion over him. *Secondly.* Let us be married to the fellowship and to the service of the living Christ. The law, as given by Moses, has no claim upon us now. All that is moral in that law has a claim ; but this existed before Moses, and is eternal as God is immutable and everlasting. That law of Moses, so far as its ordinances of divine service are concerned and its worldly sanctuary, is dead. Prescription and exclusive sanctity as to place of worship are dead ; a human priesthood is dead ; carnal sacrifices are dead ; ritualism is dead ; symbolism is dead ; the whole

¹ 1 Corinthians xi. 23-25.

Mosaic economy is dead. And as “the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth: but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband,”¹ so we “are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that we should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.”

Let us then be married to the living Christ—1. By the non-recognition of the Mosaic institutes. As they who are married, forsaking all other, cleave to each other so long as both shall live, so the disciple of Jesus must cease to be a disciple of Moses, if he has been Moses’ disciple, and must refuse to be, if, having never been, he is advised or tempted to be.

2. By looking to him, and continuing to look to him, for every good thing. All that we really need, the mediation of Jesus Christ can secure. With him are the riches and power and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing of the kingdom of God. All needful provision he can make, all needful protection he can afford, all needful help he can bestow; and his heart is full of disposition to do for us all,—exceeding abundantly above all,—that we can ask or think.

3. By cherishing and expressing true love for him. In these sceptical and cynical days, love for Jesus Christ appears to be dying out. And yet how awful the words, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha!”² Some appear to be content with knowledge without love, and others reduce their love to mere obligation for redemption from hell.

4. By obeying his commandments. Verily, these are not grievous; but if they were grievous, true love would make the yoke easy and the burden light. This is one test which Jesus gave his disciples, “If ye love me, keep my command-

¹ Rom. vii. 2.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

ments."¹ The love which is dumb and inactive, is not the love which responds to the love of Christ.

5. By recognising himself in his disciples, and by ministering to his needy ones for his sake. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."²

6. By defending his name and his mission. "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."³

And 7. By devoting ourselves to advance the object of his mission and the aim of his present mediation. That object, according to the words of the Lord Jesus, is to save the world. The world, according to this, needs saving. It is disordered and deranged, and in some sense lost—sufficiently lost to justify such interposition. To save the world, the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and died for us, and arose from our midst to the skies. And with this object we may sympathize, and with this work we may co-operate. We may be married to the mission of the Son of God.

And what can we do to save the world? John Baptist pointed out the Redeemer, and directed men to him, and we may be as a finger pointing to Christ. Philip declared to Nathanael his own experience, and we may tell others that we have found a Saviour. The woman of Samaria invited the people of her city to her Saviour. We can repeat his gracious "Come unto me." John represents this

¹ John xiv. 15. ² Matt. xxv. 34-36. ³ 2 Tim. i. 8.

in the Apocalypse: "The bride saith, Come."¹ The church of the Christ of the living God is supposed to invite all men to the Redeemer. By her character and conduct she saith, "Come;" by cordial welcome and earnest entreaty she saith, "Come." Parents who bring up their children in the nurture and discipline of the Lord, teachers of children who teach not themselves but Christ Jesus our Saviour, Christian visitors who from house to house carry the glad tidings of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, and all who repeat the faithful saying that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, are furthering the mission of the Son of God, with all who, through the grace of God which bringeth salvation, live soberly, righteously, and godly.

I know of no illustration of devotedness to the objects of Christ's mission—of marriage to the Saviour's memory and to his present form of life—equal to the example of the Apostle Paul. He describes his own death to the law and marriage to Christ, and his previous marriage to the law and death unto Christ, in his epistle to the Philippians: "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his

¹ Revelation *xvii.* 17.

sufferings, being made conformable to his death."¹ Paul knew of what he was writing, when he wrote, "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead." Ignorant of the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, and unbelieving toward him, he was wedded to the law of Moses. So soon as he knew that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, he yielded himself to his service, asking, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And from that day forward, as a wife submits herself to her own husband as her head, as a wife is subject to her own husband in everything, as a wife reverences her husband, as a wife helps her husband, as a wife makes her husband's cares and joys and honours and burdens her own, as a wife blends her life with the life of her husband, so did Paul submit himself to Jesus Christ, so did he subject himself to Christ, and reverence Christ, and work for Christ, and identify himself with the reproaches and honours of Christ, and so did Paul live for Christ. "For me to live is Christ."

The case of Paul saves one from scepticism, as to the possibility of the ideal Christian life being embodied. He lived as becometh the gospel of Christ, he worked out his own salvation, he translated the precepts of Christ into conduct; according to the text, he brought forth fruit unto God.

One motive by which we should be constrained to seek and to cherish union with Jesus Christ is this—that only thereby can we live as God's children. The reference in the text is to the fruit of marriage. Elsewhere, with another reference, the same truth is presented: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."² "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."³

¹ Phil. iii. 5-10.² Gal. v. 22, 23.³ Ephes. v. 9.

“The word of the truth of the gospel which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.”¹ “Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”²

The fruit unto God named in my text is reconciliation to God, and oneness with God. It is light in the spirit, and love in the heart, and righteousness in the life. It is the fruit of fellowship with God, of the worship of God, and of the service of God. It consists of all the fruits of holiness and righteousness and godliness. The Apostle Peter names them as virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity.³ The Apostle John presents them as all included in love.

In the parable of the vine, Jesus represents union with himself as essential to all usefulness. “I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”⁴ We may apply the lesson of the parable to the whole of spiritual life. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”⁵ “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”⁶ The lesson of these words of Holy Scripture, as of my text, is this—

Nothing good and godly without Christ:

Everything good and godly by Christ.

Let us, then, all seek to be one with Christ. We may be one with him by knowledge and faith and hope and trust and love. Let us seek to grow in the knowledge of Christ,

¹ Colos. i. 5, 6.

² Colos. i. 10.

³ 2 Peter i. 5-7.

⁴ John xv. 5.

⁵ Phil. iv. 13.

⁶ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

by reading of him, thinking of him, and hearing of him. Let us ask God to help us overcome our unbelief, and to increase our faith. Let us cherish hope and trust, by meditating upon all that Jesus is, upon all that he has done and suffered, and upon the length and breadth and depth and height of his love, which surpasseth knowledge. Let us strengthen our love by beholding all that is beautiful in his character, and by considering the inestimable service he has rendered us. And of all this, divine knowledge will be the fruit, and divine wisdom will be the fruit, and holiness will be the fruit, and godliness will be the fruit, and true and abiding usefulness will be the fruit.

There are very narrow views of Christian character and of Christian usefulness current, and there are besides very erroneous views. Usefulness, according to some, is entirely in benevolent work, to the neglect of the conduct and the life. Christian character, according to others, is an unattractive sanctimoniousness, to be put on on Sunday morning and put off on Sunday night. The character described in the New Testament, and the usefulness portrayed there, are as high and noble and divine as character and service ever can be. All coming short of this is traceable to non-union with Christ. Some religious people marry themselves to a system of theology, and the fruit is pride and bigotry. Others marry themselves to a round of rites and ceremonies, and the fruit is self-deception and hypocrisy. Others marry themselves to what they account the church of Christ, and the fruit is a form of godliness without the power. Others marry themselves to a sect and denomination, and the fruit is envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. Others but partially identify themselves with Christ, and the fruit is indecision, confusion, and various evil works. The world makes the union partial, the

flesh makes the union partial, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life make this union partial ; in the degree that it is not entire, there cannot be fruit unto God. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear, forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him."¹

Nothing good without Christ. No sufficient knowledge without Christ. No union with God without Christ. No faith or trust in God without Christ. No love to God without Christ. No obedience to God without Christ. No service to God without Christ. No living to God without Christ. No hope in God without Christ. No eternal union with God without Christ.

Everything good by Christ : good with an inexpressible variety, and good of the highest and divinest kind, and good in the most perfect form, and good with an eternal duration, and good of a Godly sort.

Break, oh ! break all alliance with that which is evil, and become one with Christ. Cease to wander from Christ, and abide in him. Nothing that God has made has been made in vain ; it is not likely, therefore, that man is made in vain, and far less likely that he is redeemed in vain. We are made and redeemed to bring forth fruit unto God. Are we conscious of miserable unfruitfulness ? It may be that we are not dead to the law, not dead to the world, not dead to self. It may be that we are not perfectly united to Jesus Christ. If the shadow of doubt fall upon our supposed union with Christ, let us be faithful to the warning of the shadow, and let us give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. If, on the other hand, we be assured of our union with Christ, let our attention be

¹ Psalm xlv. 10, 11.

chiefly directed to fruitfulness in every spiritual attainment and in every good work. Some before me may be conscious of declension from all that is high in attainment and noble in service. According to a common illustration in Holy Scripture, they are guilty of spiritual adultery. But while such mourn over their unfaithfulness, let them not despair. A divine voice addresses such thus, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God ; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord : say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols ? I have heard and observed him. From me is thy fruit found." ¹

¹ Hosea xiv. 1, 2, 4, 8.

THE ATTRACTIVE POWER OF
CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

*Preached at the Annual Meeting of the Congregational Union of Scotland,
held at Glasgow, April 26th, 1864.*

THE passage of Holy Scripture which I am about to read as my text, is part of an apostolic exhortation to Christian wives, and is therefore as a whole unsuited to the present occasion. We have, however, here united with a precept to a distinct class, a statement whose application is of unlimited breadth. The words in question are :

" Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands ; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."—1 PETER iii. 1.

The wives here spoken to had husbands who, as heathen or as unbelieving Jews, received not the gospel. They are supposed either to refuse to hear the gospel, or to be so indifferent as never to listen to its joyful sound, when the opportunity is afforded them. It is, however, suggested that such may be won " without the word."

Greek scholars do not agree as to whether " word " has the same signification in the two parts of the sentence, " If any obey not *the word*, they also may without *the word*." Does " word " in the former case mean the gospel, and in

the latter case, discourse about the gospel, according to the figure of speech known as antanaclasis? or, rejecting the double sense of the term, are we to understand the gospel in both instances? The presence of the article in the first use of *λόγος* and its absence in the second use, does not exclude this interpretation. We adopt the opinion that "the word" is used in two distinct senses, and we read the passage thus: If any obey not the gospel, they also may without preaching be won by the character and conduct of the wives. The subject before us then is this: The gospel reproduced in character and conduct, a means of saving sinners from the error of their ways. In discussing this subject, however, let me guard against even the appearance of underrating the written and the preached word. Divine revelation must ever be, in comparison with all communications between man and man, The Word. The collected writings in which divine revelation is contained must ever be, The Book. And comparing, still further, word of God with word of God, the gospel, above all other portions of divine revelation, must be, The Word. So far, too, as human speaking is concerned, the lips of man are never so usefully and hopefully and divinely employed, as when repeating and expounding that which from God to man is "the word." The speaker is only a man, but "the word" is divine; he may be very poor, but "the word" is rich; he may be foolish as respects the knowledge and culture of this world, but "the word" is the wisdom of God; he may be weak, but "the word" is mighty; he may be base, but "the word" is noble; he may be despised, but "the word" will triumph gloriously.

"The word" is the voice of my Father coming to me, his prodigal son, when I was a great way off.

"The word" is my only introduction to my Saviour.

"The word" is the chosen medium of the communication of the Holy Ghost.

"The word" is the "let there be" of my new creation.

"The word" is the sun which ends the winter of my wretchedness as an unpardoned sinner.

"The word" is the silver trumpet of my spiritual resurrection.

What could I do, where should I be, without "the word?"

Without "the word," in the sense of the word being withdrawn, what revolutions would this void create! "The word" withdrawn, would, in the case of a large multitude of individuals, remove the key-stone from the beautiful arch of childhood's most sacred memories, cast into oblivion the guide of youth, and extract from the spiritual nature the seed of its highest life. "The word" withdrawn from Christendom, would rend the finest pictures, and pull down the most splendid buildings, and take the salt from the best literature, and bury in oblivion the highest science, and darken the brightest homes, and devastate the fairest countries, and undermine all righteous thrones, and send back some civilized nations to barbarism, and bring a bottomless-pit darkness, and a huge shadow of death, over the whole world. Without "the word," mankind are without gospel, without light and life. God forbid that we should ever undervalue "the word," written and preached. Bengel remarks: "A servant waiting upon guests at a great supper, and who duly trims the lamps furnished by the master of the house, that they may burn the brighter, performs a more acceptable service to the guests, than if he kindled any single taper of his own, to add to the light." To preach the word of God is to do more for mankind than to create words, no matter how

22. *A TESTIMONY POWER OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.*

intellectual or vast scientific or philosophical. Still, without the immediate and direct preaching of the word in the first instance men may be won back to God. The gospel may be reproduced in character, and thereby, as the first effective agency, sinners may be converted unto God.

This subject we would present in the form of the statements which follow:

1. "The word" received produces a distinctive character in him who accepts it.

2. The character which "the word" produces is of a nature to attract and win.

3. The influence of this gospel-formed character is necessarily most felt where it is most clearly seen.

4. The consistent exhibition of the character which "the word" forms, is one means of bringing men under the power of the word.

5. Therefore the endeavour of all Christians should be, to exhibit in their lives "the word" which they would have others believe.

First. "The word" received produces a distinctive character in him who accepts it. This is alike its object and tendency. The object and tendency of some writings are dissimilar: the aim is good but the effect is bad, or the effect is salutary although the object be evil. The object and tendency of "the word" are to form a distinct character. To this fact Jesus Christ and his apostles direct attention: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."¹ "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."² "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."³ "Being born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and

¹ John viii. 32.

² John xvii. 17.

³ James i. 18.

abideth for ever.”¹ These texts illustrate and confirm our statement, which is also established by experience and observation. We all know that thoughts ripen into action, and that all social and political beliefs produce corresponding conduct. The ancient systems of philosophy made characters, as distinct as these systems of opinion were separate. The character of the Stoic and the character of the Epicurean were created by their distinct beliefs. In like manner, the Christian creed produces a particular style of life, and a particular moral type of man. This is the result of the strength and positiveness of “the word,” the effect of its length and breadth and depth and height, and the fruit of its relation to the mission of the Holy Ghost.

“The word” reveals our relation to God the Creator of all, and shows that we are all his offspring. “The word” reveals our position as respects the law and government of God, and shows that we are transgressors—guilty, defiled, and condemned. “The word” reveals an atonement, and shows that herein is hope of eternal redemption. “The word” reveals the one living and true God—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—as the redeeming God, and shows that God is reconciling the world unto himself. Now, the man who receives “the word” is translated from darkness to light, he is transplanted from an ungenial to a friendly soil, and he admits to his nature elements which, combining with whatever is divine within him, will produce a new man and effect a new creation. Whatever difference may be attributed to the influence of darkness and light, to the power of a friendly and of an unfriendly soil, and to the introduction of a new element into any substance or body, a similar difference will be found between

¹ 1 Peter i. 23.

the spiritual condition of those who have received and those who have not received the word. The former are like a tree planted by rivers of waters, the latter are like the heath in the desert; the former are like salt with saltness, the latter are like salt without savour; the former are like a burning and shining light, the latter are like a candlestick without light.

To the proposition we are illustrating, it will be objected, that men who say that they have received "the word," are in many cases not a whit better than some others who have not received the word, nor "do" they "more than others." We admit this fact, but we protest against such use and application of it as shall contradict the statement, that "the word" received forms a new character. My knowledge of the opinions of another man, does not necessarily give those opinions power over me. My belief that a particular creed is the creed of my neighbour, does not certainly give that system of doctrines power over me. I may be acquainted with all the forms of paganism, without being a pagan, and with Mahomedanism, without being a follower of the false prophet of the sixth century. In like manner, I may know Christianity as one of the religions of the world, and approve it as good and true, without being a Christian. The hearer of "the word" is not a new creature, nor is the admirer and approver of "the word;" but in the case of the believer and doer of "the word," old things certainly pass away and all things become new. Not more certainly does the morning change the aspect of the sky, and the spring renew the face of the earth, than the reception of "the word" changes the character of the man who truly receives it.

Secondly. The character which "the word" produces is of a nature to attract and win. Its chief features are strength,

geniality, and reasonableness. The character begotten by "the word" is, 1st, Strong. It has in it all the constituents of complete moral and spiritual power, intelligence touching the highest subjects, faith in God, hope of the greatest and most enduring good, love of the purest and most fervent flame, immutable and everlasting principles of action. The martyr character is the true natural Christian character, not the exceptional, but the common character. The believer of "the word" is a man who can wear a yoke, and carry a burden, and take up a cross, and run a race, and wrestle for the mastery, and fight a good fight, and labour in a good work. He is not a shrub which the wind easily uproots, but a cedar in Lebanon enduring the storm. There are doubtless weak men who are Christians, and there are various degrees of strength in the disciples of Christ; but the weakest is the stronger for "the word," which he has received. No believer is as chaff which the wind driveth away. No disciple of Jesus Christ abides as smoking flax, or as a bruised reed. The spiritual condition begotten by "the word," finds meet expression in such language as this: "I endure all things for the elect's sake,"¹ and "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."² Now, this feature of Christian character was wondrously attractive in the first ages of Christianity, not only to the unbelieving Jew, but also to the heathen. They could not look upon the persecuted Christians without admiring their courage and heroism. Call to mind that aged saint in the second century, who, at the age of eighty-six, when urged by the proconsul of Asia Minor to save himself from a violent death by swearing in the name of the emperor and cursing Christ, not only refused this request with indignation, and triumphantly avowed himself a Christian, but stood at the

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 10.

² Phil. iv. 13.

stake unfastened by a single cord, and while the wood was being piled around him, said with a loud and praiseful voice, "I praise thee, O Lord, that thou has judged me worthy, this day and this hour, to take part among the number of thy witnesses in the cup of thy Christ." Remember those youths of the third century, who remained unshaken while every art and device of torture were employed to shake their constancy; nor forget the mother, who, following her son to execution, called to him aloud: "My son, my son, keep the living God in thy heart. Be steadfast. There is nothing fearful in that death which so surely conducts thee to life. Let thy heart be above, my son. Look up to him who dwells in heaven. To-day thy life is not taken from thee, but raised to a better. By a blessed exchange, my son, thou art this day passing to the life of heaven." But we need not go back several centuries and select illustrations from the noble army of martyrs. Time present and the path of ordinary life supply us with examples of Christian strength. He who wrestles successfully with the world, the flesh, and the devil, through many years, shows more strength than he who, while young, meekly bows his head to the axe of the executioner, or cheerfully yields his limbs to be fastened to the stake. In some aspects, and to some constitutions, more strength is required to live long for Christ than to die early for Christ. Paul, even supposing him to have died in his bed, was a more complete martyr than Stephen. The fire of lust is fiercer than that of the stake, and the axe of family and social separation is more painful than that of the executioner, and the sword of scorn is, to some natures, sharper than that of the soldier. He who endures to the end of an ordinary natural life, is stronger than he who acquiesces in being cut short by persecution, in the midst of his days. In the quiet life of a believer who

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crucifies the flesh, overcomes the world, resists the devil, and meets the demands of temptation and affliction, there is true strength; and in this strength there is real attractiveness.

2. The character formed by "the word" is also genial. There is in it the attractiveness of beauty and of pleasantness, as well as of power. The basis of that which is genial in the Christian character is love—the love which "suffereth long and is kind, which envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."¹ The connexion existing between love and receiving "the word," is thus indicated by the Apostle Peter: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."² The inseparableness of love from personal Christianity is iterated and reiterated by the sacred writers. "We know," writes the Apostle John, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."³ "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."⁴

"The word" received, working by love, makes the character genial. As lustre to the eye, and grace to the lips, and bloom to the cheek, and symmetry to the form, so are all the expressions and manifestations of love in conduct and in character. The bloom of an orchard in spring is not fairer, the golden hue of the corn in autumn is not richer, than the works and ministrations of true Christian charity. To

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 4-7. ² 1 Peter i. 22, 23. ³ 1 John iii. 14. ⁴ 1 John iv. 7, 8.

live with one who loves by the power of "the word," and to see his tears brought forth by another's weeping, and his smiles by another's laughter, to witness his complacency in all the goodness, and his joy in all the prosperity, that meet his eye, to see him giving without grudging, and working for others without complaining, to see love shown to enemies, blessings exchanged for curses, and benedictions for revilings, is to see the fairest moral sight which this earth can afford. God is love. But the influence of outloving love, is as genial as the spectacle of its manifestations is pleasant. Love produced by "the word" is, in its power over all that is good, as rain upon the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth. Wherever there is need which it can supply, love is as bread to the hungry, as water to the thirsty, as medicine to the sick, as wine to the fainting, and as balm to the wounded. He who has an eye in his soul for the beautiful, is drawn to every object of beauty within the sphere of his observation, and in like manner, he who is susceptible of attraction by Godlike love, must feel the power and force of Christian character.

3. This strong and loving character is also reasonable, it is conformed in all points to rational principles. It has within it none of the elements which constitute the fanatic or visionary. Imagination creates not this character, but faith in a divine revelation; and that revelation presents nothing contrary to reason. It appeals supremely to faith; but faith and reason are not contraries, but unities, like the eye and the ear in the human body. Hearing is not at discord with seeing; reason is the spirit's eye, and to use a figure first employed by Clement of Alexandria, faith is the spirit's ear. All that "the word" produces is consistent with a rational nature. The man who is most under the influence of Christian revelation will have the soundest

mind ; for he above all men will be spiritually sober, and his life will be a most reasonable service.

Strong, reasonable, and genial, the character which the gospel forms is of a nature to attract and win.

Thirdly. The influence of this gospel-formed character is felt most, where association is most frequent and contact most close. The text points us to the home. Without doubt this is the first and chief sphere of ordinary Christian influence. The supreme claim upon a Christian child who has unbelieving parents, is to show piety at home. The chief end of a wife who has an unbelieving husband, is so to live as to win that husband to Christ. No work, in the case of Christian parents, can lawfully compete with the bringing up of their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The Ragged-school and Sunday-school, the Tract District, and similar spheres, are not to be compared with the home. It may be that many most active and zealous Christians need to be awakened to the claims of home. Yet home is a most sacred place. Not more hallowed is the place where prayer is wont to be made. Is not a true home a very garden of Eden ? There two, no more twain, are one humanity,—supplementing each other's nature, and making, if they be Christians, one image of the one God. There the heritage of God is bestowed in the branches from the parent stock, in the olive plants around the table. There humanity passes through all the stages of young life, and reaches at length maturity. From thence goes forth the bride, to forget her father's house, and to light some new dwelling with the lamp of her love, and from thence proceeds the bridegroom, to establish another earthly home, and to raise another household. In the home are felt, in all their power, the vicissitudes of poverty and wealth, health and sickness, prosperity and adversity ; and there are experienced, also,

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the stillness and darkness of the shadow of the angel of death. A depth of enjoyment, a sacred seclusion, a sweet repose, and a calm quiet are in the home, which elsewhere are sought in vain: or it through unequal yoking between husband and wife, and if by prodigality of children, or from any other cause, there be misery and disquiet, the sadness and unrest are as hellish and diabolical as wretchedness and restlessness can be. Looking into all that is gathered into a home, and at all that happens in a home; considering, too, that there thought is unfettered, and feeling unrestrained, and speech free, and conduct natural: we feel that there is no place upon earth where Christian influence is so likely to be felt, or is so closely attended by the promise of happy and enduring results. The spheres that are most home-like stand next in importance and hopefulness.

The text, we have said, points to a home as the sphere of Christian influence, but it also directs our attention to woman as influential there, and it leads our thoughts to the presence of unbelief in the family. This suggests two things: firstly, that there is often evangelistic work to be done in families of which Christians are part; and secondly, that this work may be extensively wrought by Christian women. The most youthful readers of Xenophon will remember the excitement of the returning Greeks, when, having ascended the holy mountain Theches, they caught sight of the sea. First the vanguard shouted, "The sea! the sea!" Then the main body of soldiers shouted, "The sea! the sea!" Then the rearguard adopted the shout, "The sea! the sea!"—and when all had ascended the mountain, tears and embraces mingled with the cry, "The sea! the sea!" The reason of this excitement is to be found in the fact that the Greek warriors, by the eyes of the imagination and of the heart, saw reflected in those blue

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waters the homes which they had left, and by the ears of the soul, they heard, travelling over those waters, the household voices of tenderness and love. The face toward home was the back toward danger and misery, hardship, bloodshed, and death. This is not always true of the soldiers of Christ. The father has left the battle-field of business for his dwelling, but not to throw off his armour and to lay by his sword. He passes from wrestling with evil in the open world to struggling with sin in the domestic enclosure. Or the youth quits the office or factory, and enters his father's house, not for the communion of saints, but only to endure the contradiction of sinners in a more painful form. Blessed are those members of families, who, having gone to work and to labour until the evening, can shout as they first catch sight of their dwellings, "My home! my home!"—and who can anticipate their return as involving hours spent in sacred rest and holy joy. In strong contrast with this case is that of a Christian wife with an unbelieving husband, and that of a Christian mother with unbelieving adult children. A keeper at home, she cannot escape contact and collision with that which causes her the deepest anguish. But what would the family be without this sacred salt, and without this holy leaven, and without this celestial light? And as the salt is in this case in contact with the land, and as the leaven is in the meal, and as the light is on the candlestick, we may expect at least some measure of that good which salt and leaven and light effect. The influence of woman is of an individual and peculiar kind.

"Let her be

All that not harms distinctive womanhood,
For woman is not undevelop'd man,
But diverse. Could we make her as the man,
Sweet love were slain, whose dearest bond is this—
Not like to like, but like in difference."

Where the yoking is not unequal, we may add :

“ Yet in the long years liker must they grow ;
 The man be more of woman, she of man—
 He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
 Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world ;
 She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care—
 More as the double-natured poet, each ;
 Till at the last she set herself to man,
 Like perfect music unto noble words.”

But where the yoking is unequal, as in the case of the text, we may still remember “that the mind of woman is exquisitely adapted for playing upon and influencing the finer parts of man’s nature, and whensoever the heart of man is dead to that influence, it is dead to almost every higher and purer feeling, which alone distinguishes him from the beast of the forest.” Christian women, underrate not your influence in benevolent and religious spheres, for there it is as potent as Christian influence can be. Christian wives and mothers, account the home the chief sphere for the putting forth of your power. Be priestesses in this veiled sanctuary, offering yourselves up there as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. Christian men and women, whatever your hands may find to do beyond, neglect not the home. Fellow Christians, let us seek to shine as lights where God has placed us, and not vainly long for inaccessible positions of influence and usefulness.

Fourthly. Believers of the word may accomplish the end of preaching, by being doers of the word in the face of unbelievers. “They also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.” The unbeliever changed to a believer is here said to be “won”—won to the Redeemer of men to whom he was lost, won as a crown for Jesus to wear, won as a piece of silver for Christ’s treasury and as a gem for his casket, won as a victory over

hell and sin, won to the church of the living God, won to himself as a man restored to his right mind, won to all that is good and true and godly; and this winning to God, and for God, may be accomplished by consistent Christian character and by Christlike conduct. The reverse of all this is true. By a conversation unbecoming the gospel of Christ, the infidel is confirmed in his infidelity, and the sceptic encouraged in his scepticism, and the scorner established in his scorning, and the impenitent is hardened in his impenitence, and the blasphemer confirmed in his blasphemy. Is the character of a Christian in any case negative as to its influence? Is not the disciple always a stone of stumbling, or a stone of foundation? We admit that conduct becoming the gospel of Christ may sometimes blind the eye instead of opening it, and make the ear more deaf instead of unstopping it, and turn the heart into stone instead of flesh; but in this case the Christian is the innocent occasion of mischief, while in the other case he is the guilty cause. Unintentionally to rivet the chains by which men are bound to evil is terrible; but to do this carelessly and wantonly, is to co-operate with the great destroyer of men, and to use our influence against the redeeming God. Men talk of the solemnity of death, but can any condition be more solemn than life, when we see what is involved in living as Christians among those who believe not the word? Men speak of the blessedness of heaven, but can any state be more blessed than that in which we may win back lost souls? The celestial state is more happy, but surely not more useful. To die would doubtless be personal gain, but let us not be too eager for the joy and rest and peace of heaven, while we may win souls. To be winning souls here is in many respects better than resting from our labours yonder, nor may we forget

that "they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."¹

The great want of the world at the present time, is the Christianity of the New Testament translated into action. The demand for Christians is more urgent than the demand for churches, the demand for pietists is more earnest than the demand for preachers. Men would see works that they may believe our words. Let then our endeavour be, to exhibit in our lives the truths we would have others believe. The New Testament presents to us the portraits of the true Christian and of a true church, with the portraits of men whom God accounts faithful, and introduces to ministry in his church. Let us keep these portraits ever before us, never despairing of becoming like unto them. The finger of God can engrave the form and all the features on our nature. The Sun of Righteousness can transfer this God-made picture to our spirits. Let us subject ourselves to the finger of God, and expose ourselves to the rays of the spiritual sun. We say again, the great demand of our times is for "the word" in what our text calls conversation, for the gospel in practical godliness, for the truth in our lives: for "the word" embodied in humanity, in men, women, and children, in young men and maidens, in old men and little ones, in husbands and wives, in fathers and mothers, in brothers and sisters, in masters and servants. The great demand of our times is for "the word" translated into action in the pursuit of daily labour, in the conduct of trade and commerce, in every profession and handicraft, for "the word" exhibited through the life on the field by the ploughman, in the factory by the operative, in the market and on 'Change by the merchant, and in the home by members of families. The world is sick of our theorizing about

¹ Daniel xii. 3.

Christian morals, and it demands the practice. It cannot sympathize with us in our cleaving to nice distinctions as to doctrine, but it will respect us if we show a holy separateness from evil, and a persistent cleaving to that which is good. Action may or may not constitute oratory, but certainly "holy living" is personal Christianity. Revelation has religion, and doctrine duty, for its aim. The salvation that is in Christ Jesus is redemption unto God. We are born again to live godly lives. So soon as we are pardoned, a voice addresses us, saying, "Go and sin no more." Justified by faith, we are required to show our faith by our works. Having first given ourselves to the Lord, we give ourselves to each other in the fellowship of the church, that we may realize and show forth the social form of religious life. So that within the church and without the church, and everywhere, the great demand upon us is for a "conversation becoming the gospel of Christ." And can we meet this claim? Not alone, not unaided. But are we alone? are we unaided? Where is he who said, "Lo! I am with you alway"? Where is the Comforter, who was promised to abide with us for ever? Where is the source of every good and perfect gift, the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness? Where? The Father has not left us alone. The Holy Spirit is not taken from us. The Saviour is with us, and we have only to use our resources, and we shall be filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Christ Jesus, to the glory and praise of God.

XXVII

PROVOKING TO EMULATION.

"If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them."—ROMANS xi. 14.

THESE are the words of a Jew concerning the Jews. The writer was a disciple of Jesus Christ and an apostle. His mission, however, was not to his Hebrew brethren alone, but also to the Gentiles. On the occasion of his conversion to the faith of Christ, God had said of him to one Ananias, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."¹ Of himself he wrote, "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen."² And again, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."³ So far, therefore, as the calling of God and his chief labours were concerned, Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles. Yet he did not forget the Jews. A man of cold heart would have relieved himself of care for this small nation, by pleading the more heavy claims of Gentile kingdoms. But the heart of Paul was warm. A man of indolent spirit would have excused himself from efforts for the Jews, by pleading abundant labours for the Gentiles. But Paul was not a slothful

¹ Acts ix. 15.

² Gal. i. 16.

³ Ephes. iii. 8.

servant. Hence no opportunity of preaching Christ to the Jews was let slip ; and every day his "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel were, that they might be saved."¹

Our text informs us of some of Paul's efforts and aims on behalf of the Jews. He here tells the church at Rome, that he tried to provoke the Jews to emulation—to irritate the heart which was becoming insensitive, to disturb the mind which was dreaming exhausting dreams, to make the Jews angry with themselves, dissatisfied with their condition, and emulous of the benefits which the Gentile Christians enjoyed. When in the presence of Jews, he joyously and thankfully confessed himself a Jew, he spake of his Hebrew descent and education ; he told the story of his conversion, described the rest which the wearing of the yoke of Christ had given to his soul, spake of the Mosaic economy as a yoke of bondage and of the disciple of Moses as in a state of fear, described the Levitical institutes as made up of beggarly rudiments, avowed his mission to the Gentiles, spake of his success in preaching Christ to them, proved that Jesus was the Christ, and recounted the glorious privileges of his kingdom. He did all this in hope that the Jew would contrast his own position with that of the believing Gentile, and that aroused, disquieted, and anxious, he would inquire into the claim of Jesus to be accounted Son of God and Saviour of the world, and would be thereby led to believe the gospel. Writing as a Jew, Paul calls the Jews "his flesh." He and they had one ancestor, and were born of one blood ; their land was also his country, and their people were his people. Writing as a Christian, Paul avows that salvation from unbelief was his object in provoking the Jew to emulation. "Isms" had not then been grafted on the simple Christian creed. Social organizations under Christian

¹ Romans x. 1.

protection had not been planted, and Paul would not permit men to call him master. To save the Jew from unbelief, he in part laboured and lived. He desired the salvation of all ; he prayed for the salvation of all. As one labourer in this field, he sought "to save some," and as an earnest man he sought this by "any means."

My text calls us to consider—

First. The heart of man in a state of indifference towards the unspeakable gift of God.

The Jew was satisfied with that which ought not to have satisfied him, and he was indifferent towards that for which he should have been hungry and thirsty. He had Palestine, but he ought to have desired a better country, even a heavenly. He lived under an old covenant, but should have been ready for the new covenant. He had the patterns of things in the heavens, and should have been prepared for the heavenly things themselves. He had a shadow of good things to come, and should have been standing with hands outstretched toward the objects thus foreshadowed. He had sacrifices, and should have been watching for the Lamb of God. He had a human priesthood, and should have been expecting the manifestation of the priest who should be a high priest for ever. The Jew had a schoolmaster, whose mission it was to lead him to Christ. But he was satisfied with the pedagogue, satisfied with changeable, mortal, sinful priesthood, satisfied with the blood of bulls and goats, satisfied with patterns and shadows of good and heavenly things, satisfied with the old covenant and with the earthly Canaan, and satisfied with symbols, when the substance was at hand.

This is a strong representation, but it falls short of the truth. The foot of the invader and conqueror was upon the land, and upon the neck of the Jew. Both country and city were doomed to destruction. The holy and beautiful

house was, when our text was written, desolate. It had been desolate some seventeen years. From the ninth hour of the day on which Jesus of Nazareth was crucified, it had been desolate. In reality, there had been no altar of God, no ark of God, no mercy-seat of God, no special presence of God there. Congregations had assembled, priests had ministered, sacrifices had been offered. But God sought not this treading of his courts; in vain were the oblations; incense was an abomination to him; the feasts and calling of assemblies he could not away with; the solemn meeting was iniquity. "He who killed an ox was as if he slew a man; he that sacrificed a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offered an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burned incense, as if he blessed an idol."¹ That hour had come of which Jesus had spoken, when he said, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."² How dull and senseless and morally stupid, to cling to the shadow, when a shadow of death! to prefer the sickly beams of a waning moon, or the feeble light of a solitary star, to the glorious light of a midday sun! to bind round the body the rags and tatters of a worn-out garment, while a new vesture is at hand folded up! to continue to repeat the letters of the alphabet without learning to read! to abide with the pedagogue instead of coming to the teacher! Toward certain national blessings there was anything but indifference in the Jew, but toward the incomparable blessings of the kingdom of heaven, there was no mind, no heart, no soul. All this is not so much Jewish as human. The emulation of our first mother was, by the primitive temptation, misdirected. From the hour in which that temptation was successful, the bow of the archer has been turned toward the earth, and the keystone

¹ Isaiah lxvi. 3.² John iv. 21.

of the nation has been traced to the soil. The spirit of prophecy, the spirit of sacrifice. Having eyes we see not, and having ears we hear not, and having hands we handle not. We are always provoked to emulation by the promise of reward, and our land was excited to anger, and Abime and Abime's posterity sold themselves into bondage and slavery. No one moved with fear built the ark, but the wind of the Spirit was irresistible. Abraham was inspired by faith to slay his own son under a false promise, but his near relatives sought a commanding city in the lands of their posterity. Israel was stirred up by Moses to enter upon the journey, but soon they preferred returning and dwelling among the pots, to flying in the wings of a dove to a land of rest. The Jewish nation reached the summit of its glory in the early years of the reign of Solomon. From the time of the dedication of the Temple, the nation began to decline, and the waning continued, until as a wasted crescent Judaism came into contact with the Cross. But what as to the state of the people during this time? Their prophets say, They were "as a cottage in a vineyard; as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers," "a wild ass," "a cake not turned." They were always unworthy of their calling. Their spirit was below their condition and circumstances. No promise or prophecy provoked them to emulation.

In the fulness of time, the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost. He came to his own. A multitude of angels flocked to his birth-place with joy and praise. Certain shepherds were told of his birth, and hastened to look upon him, and to spread abroad tidings of his advent; wise men of the East, led by a star, came and worshipped; Simeon and Anna rejoiced devoutly at his birth; his mother kept in her heart the great sayings of his

¹ Isaiah i. 8.

² Hosea viii. 9.

³ Hosea vii. 8.

childhood ; the Rabbis were astonished at his understanding ; the Prophet John spake glorious things of him ; multitudes wondered at his gracious words and marvellous works. But his generation was crooked and perverse toward him ; the leaders and rulers despised and rejected him ; he was without honour in his own country, and among his own kindred ; there were some hosannas, but they were drowned by cries of " Crucify him ;" Barabbas, the notable robber, was preferred before him ; " his own " slew him ; his disciples were slow of heart toward him.

An inferior being would not have been slain. Christ was too good for the people. Their emulation was too low to reach such an object. At and after the day of Pentecost, many Jews were provoked to emulation, but this emulation passed away, and within a century of the birth of Jesus, false Christs were substituted for the Christ of God.

It seems as though man can never accept good, pure and uncorrupted. No sooner had the light of the world begun to shine, than a cry arose for the twilight of Judaism and for the night of Paganism. No sooner had the power and wisdom of God become manifest, than a cry arose for the weakness and folly of men. Men asked and received, they sought and found. And the history of the church for eighteen centuries is very much the sad story of the substitution of error for truth, of unspiritual worship for spiritual worship, of outward and visible signs for inward and spiritual grace, of sacraments for the service of the Mediator and the Spirit, and the substitution of the church for the Christ of God. The Reformation provoked to emulation. And subsequently, Wesley and Whitefield in this country provoked the people to emulation ; but now as heretofore, here as everywhere, we seem to hear a cry, " Not this man, but Barabbas." 'Not Christ but Antichrist.' We might speak of millions

outside Christendom whose emulation carries them no higher than a senseless idol. We might speak of Christendom content with the human, where nothing should satisfy but the divine. But let us look at "our own flesh."

Multitudes in our England live but to gratify the lowest animal passions and appetites; their emulation does not raise them to the level of the beasts that perish. Many, free from animal lusts, live for light pleasure and for small enjoyments. A large majority of men live to earn and to eat the bread that perisheth. Not a few live to get gain, and to acquire wealth. Some live to climb to dizzy heights in the social scale; others live to excel in the particular occupation which they make the business of life; others for the praise and favour of their fellow-men. Now that which is good among these varied objects is far below the highest good. There is a spirit in man to satisfy, as well as a body. There is godlike blessedness within reach, as well as temporary pleasure. There is bread provided that endureth unto everlasting life, beside bread that perisheth; and there is water, of which if a man drink, he shall never thirst. There are true riches in addition to uncertain riches. There is honour that cometh from God, besides the honour whose source is man. There is higher work than that by which we earn bread and acquire wealth. There is praise of God beside praise of man. There is redemption to God and salvation unto eternal life, as well as all the privileges and advantages connected with the life that now is. But toward these things the multitude in this nation have no emulation. How many, how very many, are utterly indifferent to moral and spiritual and religious blessings!

And amongst those who profess to have accepted the highest good, we often observe a low emulation. One has the form of godliness without the power. Another has

a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. Another limits his religion to the possession of knowledge; it consists of scriptural ideas and orthodox opinions. Another finds his whole religious life in sensations and emotions. Another is contented with a correct conduct and a reputable character, and cares not for religious love or godly zeal. Another declares he is rich and increased in goods, and has need of nothing, because his sect is fashionable and popular, and his worship according to an ancient or generally accepted ritual. Another is satisfied with the rest he finds in accepting the infallibility of some church, or the orthodoxy of a particular ministry, and instead of proving all things, he has never set himself to prove anything. So that while the atheist is contented to say, 'There is no God,' and the deist is contented to believe that there is no divine providence or government, and the sceptic is satisfied with feeling that there is no certain religious truth,—others, who profess a distinctive religious creed, are far below their professed belief in spiritual experience, in character, and in life. The godly emulation of the people is low. Oh! for ten thousand men like Paul, to provoke them to emulation!

Secondly. Behold one who has himself received the unspeakable gift, striving to remove indifference from others.

There was much in Jesus Christ personally, and there was much in his ministry, calculated to stir and arouse. He baptized with fire. He brought not peace only, but a sword. He set men at variance. His hearers became builders—some wise, others foolish. He put new wine into new bottles, and new cloth on new garments. He sowed good seed where others sowed tares. He likens the glorious things of his kingdom to the mustard-seed and herb, to leaven, to a pearl of great price, to treasure hid, to a great supper. His disciples are prodigals restored; all who are not his

disciples are sheep going astray. He is the light; those who contradict him are blind leading the blind.

The spirit of the ministry of Jesus was the spirit of expostulation with those who were satisfied with evil called good, or with a lower kind of good than that which Jesus offered. He spake as the old prophet: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."¹ He said: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."² "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."³ Finding fault with the things of the first covenant, he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."⁴ "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."⁵

John Baptist preached in harmony with this spirit of Christ Jesus. The axe is to be laid to the root of the tree; barren trees are to be hewn down and burned; all wheat is to be garnered; chaff is to be burned with unquenchable fire. And when men were inclined to rest in him, he cried, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I."⁶

¹ Isaiah iv. 2. ² John iv. 13, 14. ³ John vi. 27. ⁴ Matt. xi. 28-30.

⁵ John vii. 37, 38.

⁶ Matt. iii. 11.

The manifest tendency of the teaching of Jesus to provoke to emulation, to make men dissatisfied with that which then was, and to arouse them to seek something better, led in part to our Lord's crucifixion. It was this which imprisoned Peter, and stoned Stephen, and beheaded James, and scourged Paul and Silas. It was this which imprisoned Paul and Silas, put Ephesus into an uproar for a whole day, sent Paul a prisoner to Rome, crucified Peter, banished John, and shed the blood of the noble army of martyrs. The Christian revelation cries to us all, 'Mightier!' 'Higher!' 'Better!' 'The Best!'

The life and example of Paul wrought upon indifference. He himself, by what he was, provoked many. He provoked the indolent by his activity, the bigot by his charity, the careless ones by his consistency, the changeable in opinion by his positive belief, the half-hearted by his zeal, and the cold-hearted by the heat of his enthusiasm and love. Everywhere his character was like salt quickening the dull, and like light illumining the dark. Unbelievers and false brethren were not at ease in the presence of Paul. He stirred men by his character and life, and also by direct endeavours for their salvation. "If by any means I may save some." "Any means:"—by preaching and teaching Jesus Christ. "Any means:"—by instruction, expostulation, entreaty, persuasion. "Any means:"—by appeals to fear and hope, to conscience and to self-love. "Any means:"—by much patience, by the endurance of afflictions, distresses, necessities, stripes, imprisonments, tumults; by labours, watchings, and fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned; by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report. "If by any means:" wise as serpents, harmless as doves,

all things to all men to save some. "Any means:" some very arduous, some very abasing, some involving much self-denial. Ours for Paul-like men to provoke to emulation them which are our flesh! According to our power and opportunity, let us try and do it.

Our fellow-citizens are near us. We must travel seven or eight thousand miles to reach the Negro, eight thousand miles to preach the gospel to the Kafir, fifteen thousand miles to provoke the Hindoo to emulation, and sixteen thousand miles to stir the Japanese and Chinese. Our own flesh are about our path: they are always with us; they see our conduct, and they hear our words: we speak one language; whenever we will, we can try to do them good. To foreigners we may be unable, individually, to set a good example; we cannot address them; but we have opportunity to provoke to emulation our own people. Suffer the example of Paul to provoke you to this good work. But I have something better to present than the example of Paul, and the spirit of my text would be violated if I kept that "something better" back. This is the example of one who also was a Jew. Abraham was his father. A daughter of Israel was his mother. Through four years he went about among his own flesh, teaching, preaching, doing good, and working miracles. By all the means of character, conduct, life, example, and service, he sought to provoke his own people to emulation, even as a hen strives to gather her chickens under her wings. And when he saw they would not, he looked upon them and wept. "His own flesh" slew him. But after his resurrection, he employed other means to provoke them to emulation. Is this pattern too perfect? Then for the present follow Paul, and let him be your pedagogue unto Christ.

Estimating their need by their dangers and destitution,

the rich in the land are in most need of being provoked to emulation. Many of this class seek nothing higher than coronets, and estates, and titles, and gay clothing, and sumptuous fare, and pleasant pictures, and splendid mansions, all which things perish with the using. But looking at numbers, persons in other conditions of life have the strongest claim. There are multitudes who think of nothing higher and better than a good business and high wages. These, in a moral and religious sense, are asleep at the plough and at the bench, in the shop and in the mill. Nothing higher than that which pertains to the body do they desire. Many in this condition of life keep no sabbath, frequent no house of prayer, listen to no Christian teacher; God's word is not their heritage or choice. Some are found in a state of want and filth and misery, far below the condition of wild beasts. Those who are degraded by their own vices and crimes, envy and hate all who are not in their low estate. And either unaffected by any Christian instrumentality, or left uncared for by Christians, the filthy are filthy still, and the unrighteous are unrighteous still. The infidel, in his hatred of religion, is as a leopard to his spots. The backslider has returned to his evil ways, as a dog to his vomit, and as a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. The man who confesses he has never been religious, is as unconscious of religious influences as a mummy is insensible to light and to air. And the children of such characters grow up in the image and likeness of their parents. Be followers of him who said, "If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and may save some of them." But beside this, and above this, be followers of him who died for all, that they who live might not henceforth live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again.

XXVIII

THE WIDOW'S GIFT.

Preached at the Opening of Kingsland Chapel, July 22nd, 1858.

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mite: which make a farthing.

"And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

"For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."—MARK xii. 41-44.

JESUS had recently entered Jerusalem, and he had been walking about the Temple, making a careful and solemn survey of the buildings and their contents. According to the Evangelist Mark, "he had looked round about upon all things,"¹ upon the site and the structure, upon the antiquities and the architecture, the costly materials and the splendid workmanship, upon foundations and walls and gates, and courts and columns, and halls and balustrades and chambers, and magazines and lazarettos and treasuries, and upon the world-famed porch. He had looked upon marble columns, carved cedar-fittings, variegated pavements, brazen doors, white marble walls, golden pinnacles, embroidered

¹ Mark xi. 11.

curtains, and furniture of Corinthian brass, of polished marble and of shining gold. He had looked round upon the people, upon Priest and Levite, upon worshipping men and women. He had seen them that sold and bought in the Temple, and the stranger within the gates, and the boy of twelve just admitted to public worship, and the infant carried in its mother's arms to be presented to the Lord, and the men of different characters who had come up to the Temple to pray, the Pharisee and the publican, the just and the unjust, the devout and Anna-like widow, the mourner in Zion, and those who were joyful in their king. He had looked upon the laver and the altar, upon the waters of purification and the sacrifice of atonement and the consuming fire. And as Jesus looked round, not a person escaped him, not a thing evaded his eye. He looked with an eye for the beautiful, and saw every perfect form ; with an eye of kindness, and saw every son of need and every child of sorrow ; with the eye of holiness, and saw every sinner and every saint ; with the eye of Deity, and saw through all veils and draperies and curtains and clothing, through all concealments and shams and hypocrisies ; so that, as he looked round on all, he saw and knew all.

He has looked round in silence. He now opens his mouth, and foretels the desolation of the Temple and the destruction of Jerusalem, and having denounced the Pharisees with bitter imprecations, he sits down to observe and watch. His head has drooped to his bosom, his eyes being closed, or fixed on the ground ; but his attention is recalled to the people by the sound of money falling into the chests placed for its reception, and looking up he sees a multitude flocking thither to deposit their sacred offerings, and among them many that were rich casting in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites.

To this poor widow I am anxious to direct your thoughts. We will look at—1. The giver. 2. The gift. 3. The place, or scene of the gift. 4. The object of the gift. 5. The spirit of the gift. 6. The recognition of it by Jesus. And 7. Christ calling his disciples' attention to it.

First, The giver: a widow, and a poor widow.

The widow alone understands widowhood. The poet, the philanthropist, the sympathizing friend, the religious author and teacher, enter into the widow's grief by sympathy and force of imagination; but the bitterness of widowhood must be felt to be known. As an affliction, and as a bereavement, the trouble of the widow is a sorrow by itself. The weeds she wears cannot reveal the weeping of her heart. Have I said, The widow alone understands widowhood? I ought to have excepted the widow's God. He knows her sorrow, and is perfectly acquainted with her grief. And God describes it by one word: God says, she is "desolate." She looks for the familiar face where she was wont to see it, but it is not there; she watches for the well-known form in the place which knew it, but that place knows it no more; in forgetfulness she speaks as in days of old, but echo coldly returns her loving utterances; she stretches out her hand to grasp the stronger arm on which she was wont to lean, but it falls to her side. Her heart is full of emotion, and she must speak, but where is the listening ear? Her mind is racked with perplexity, and she must ask advice, but where is her faithful counsellor? Ah! where? Desolate is the home, and desolate the table and the chamber, and desolate to her even the highway and the place of public assembly. "Desolate" is written upon the widow's heart.

Sorrow often makes people selfish, but the benevolent donor in the case before us was *a widow*.

And she was a *poor* widow:—perhaps a young widow,

whose husband had been cut off before he could provide for his own house ; or a widow whose husband, overtaken by calamity, had consigned his all to creditors, and had died with broken heart ; or a widow whose husband had outlived all his resources and energies and friends, and who had died just as the meal in the barrel had wasted, and the oil in the cruise had failed. Poverty, like rain, comes from several quarters, and is not easy to be borne, whether the wind that brings it blow from east or west, from south or north. With poverty we generally associate getting, not giving ; receiving, not imparting ; begging, not bestowing ; but the illustrious donor in this case was a *poor* widow. She was one of a class, and yet one by herself ; she had no precise counterpart ; the story of her life, if told, would wear its own features, in companionship with the tales which a hundred widows might tell. In that story there were certain circumstances and certain courses of action, certain bright and dark passages, which made that story hers, and not another's. God knew her, not as part of a class, but as an individual, and it may be that her characteristics were very prominent, and her individuality sharply defined. The tree is known by its fruit ; and thus judging, this poor widow was pious and generous and self-denying ; for in giving her two mites, she "of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

Look, *secondly*, at the gift.

Money, which, if loved, is the root of all evil, but which, if rightly used, answereth all things ; money, often hard to get and sometimes hard to hold, and generally most hard to part with ; money, "the master organ, the soul's seat, the pineal gland of the body social ;" money, the greatest impediment to a man's entrance into the kingdom of God ; money, the talent which is most frequently hid, the possession

It is meet and right that we give where we receive. The tree yields its fruit on the very spot where it has been nourished by the earth; there, where it has received the light and air and heat of heaven, does it hold up as into the face of heaven its increase. The child gives joy to the parent in the home whose very walls remind the mother of her anguish. The place of an unsealed spring is the seat of a flowing fountain. And it seems but meet that, in the place where we receive, we give. And what a place of blessing is a true house of the Lord; it is Bethel and holy ground, it is beautiful Zion and Bethesda, a house of light and life and love, of healing and salvation and redemption.

Brother, wast thou born in some church of Christ? born, born again, born from above, born of God? Then there you have received life, even life everlasting. The place of your first birth is beyond many places interesting, but this place in sacred associations exceeds them all. Sad and melancholy thoughts might have gathered around the home of infancy, and thou mightest have cursed the day of thy birth and the place of thy birth; but all this sadness is prevented by thy most glorious second birth. Hast thou in the house of God received eternal life? then what canst thou ever give, that shall be a meet and suitable expression of thy obligations for this donation? Giving, where there has been such wondrous receiving, seems but a reasonable service.

Christian brethren, if you were not "born again" in the house of prayer, it has been to you a place in which you have received most glorious gifts. You have hungered and asked for food, and here God has given you bread of life; you have thirsted and craved drink, and here Christ has given you living water. You have looked and searched for

And here he has manifested himself as he does not unto the world, you have desired to behold your Saviour, and here you have seen Jesus: you have prayed for the Holy Ghost to come, and here he has descended, sometimes as fire, and sometimes as a dove. You have longed to hear God speaking to you, and he has broken silence, and here you have hearkened to the voice of his word. You have come burdened with a sense of guilt, and have gone away rejoicing in the blessedness of pardon; you have come feeling yourself in the position of the unrighteous before God, and you have gone down to your house justified. You have come filled with unrest, and have gone home in peace; you have come perplexed in spirit, and here glorious light has risen upon you. You have come oppressed by cares, and here you have cast them upon God: you have come weighed down by grief, and here the burden has been taken away. You have come crying, and gone home singing; you have come weeping, and have gone home with the light of laughter on your countenance: you have come clad in sackcloth, and returned wearing the garments of salvation. You have crawled here like a wounded worm, and run home like a giant refreshed with wine: you have come cleaving to the dust, and here you have mounted as on the wings of eagles. You have come desolate, and gone home in communion with the blessed family of God in heaven and in earth; you have come empty, and returned full; you have come weak, and returned strong; you have come sick, and returned in health; you have come poor, and gone home the possessor of "unsearchable riches." And shall the tree refuse to bear where it is watered and sunned and nourished? And shall the spring make useless reservoirs for its waters within the earth, instead of pouring them in useful streams over the earth? Here, where we so

freely receive, we should freely give. This certain poor widow cast her two mites into the treasury of the Temple.

And what, *fourthly*, was the object of this gift? These two mites were given as a freewill offering to the support of the Temple, its institutions and its services, and the offering them with this intent, constituted this "certain poor widow" a contributor to all that the Temple yielded,—to all it offered to heaven, and to all it gave to the children of men. The incense and the light and the fire and the shewbread and the daily sacrifices were, in part, this woman's oblation. She helped to clothe the priests in their holy garments, to supply the altars with oblations, and to preserve the order, decency, and beauty of the house of God. Say not, She gave only two mites. This voluntary offering, although commercially so small, as really contributed to support the Temple, as the immense revenue derived from tithes and other appointed contributions. Jehovah received these two mites, and the world was by this offering made a debtor. This certain poor widow sang in the songs, offered holy oblations in the sacrifices, and served in all the services of the Temple.

"A spark is a molecule of matter, yet may it kindle the world,
Vast is the mighty ocean, but drops have made it vast.
Despise not then a small thing, either for evil or for good,
For a look may work thy ruin, or a word create thy wealth.
The walking this way or that, the casual stopping or hastening,
Hath saved life and destroyed it, hath cast down and built up fortunes.
Commit thy trifles unto God, for to him is nothing trivial;
And it is but the littleness of man that seeth no greatness in a trifle."

He who is infinitely removed from all littleness, saw true greatness in the casting of two mites into the treasury of God's Temple by a certain poor widow. Character is given to an action by the spirit in which it is performed.

Let us look, *fifthly*, at the spirit of the offering. What

impulse opened the hand of this centen year widow, and what miracle attended it? Was it positive thankfulness for benefits which she had received in the house of the Lord? It may be that thankfulness moved her, and that she had valued more highly the benefit of God's sanctuary, since she became a mourning widow, than while she was a rejoicing wife. Perhaps on her first visit to the Temple after she had buried her dead, she had heard words of consolation which had soothed her wounded heart. The Levites were perhaps singing some of those good Psalms, and she heard them chant "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation." "The Lord preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow." And she said within herself, "The widows: and I a widow: then the Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want: the Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? God is our refuge and strength, our present help in trouble." And with her soothed and quieted spirit, she found the Temple both Bethel and Bethesda. Because her widow's tears had been wiped away in the Temple, she cast her two mites into the treasury.

What impulse opened her hand? Was it the force of hallowed and pleasant association? This place, as a centre, held in connexion all the leading events of her life. Her fathers worshipped there, and with this sacred place were connected the most sacred occurrences, and the most beloved of men. Thither had she gone with him whose death had proved the quenching of the light of her dwelling. And as she thinks of him, now sleeping in the bosom of Abraham, her thoughts find a more congenial scene in the Temple than in the home. The dead, even as the God of the dead, love the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and their visits are more frequently to God's sanctuary than to our homes.

Psalm lxxviii. 5.

* Psalm cxlvi. 9.

What was the impulse? Perhaps it was gratitude and hallowed association mingling with the spirit of true piety. Apart from any special consolation or peculiar associations, she could say, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth."¹ "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."² The spirit of the offering was the spirit of true piety and of real godliness. It may be that in her worship she had been saying, 'I will love thee, O Lord, my strength,' and that love, increased by worship, carried these two mites from her scrip to her hand, and from her hand to the treasury of the Lord.

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

Notice, *sixthly*, The divine recognition of the gift. Jesus Christ saw the gift, estimated it, approved it, and commended the giver. He did not speak *to* her, but *of* her, and not of her in a loud voice, but in an undertone, into the ears of his disciples. This certain poor widow may not know, even now, that her gift was noticed. The part which Jesus Christ took in this matter may not have been mentioned to her, she may have been buried by the side of her husband in the grave of her household, long before Mark and Luke wrote of her; or, if she lived to that time, she may never

¹ Psalm xxvi. 8.

² Psalm lxxxiv. 1, 10.

warns us. Jesus approves all that he can approve, and his commendations are sincere, just, joyous, and loving recognitions of all that is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. They now reach us in the testimony of a good conscience, in a glow of gladsome feeling, in the approving words of some Israelite indeed, or in the good and blessed effect of something we have accomplished. Hereafter the commendation shall come to us in the form of "Well done, good and faithful servant," and in the light of his approving countenance, a light whose brightness shall never pass away.

It may seem hard to some of you to wait so long for recognition, and you may cry and complain; but you will surely be ashamed of your murmurings, when you find that the mite cast into God's treasury is acknowledged, and that not a cup of cold water, charitably given, loses its reward.

"And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury."

Seventhly. Look at the fact that Jesus Christ calls attention to this gift. There is something to be learned from it. What is that which we are required to learn? Such lessons as these—

1. That the greatness of a gift depends upon the possessions of the individual, after the gift has been made. A mite is a large offering in such a case as that before us. He who gives millions out of millions gives much; but he who gives mites, having only mites to give, gives more. The millions cannot be missed, but the mites must be missed. If the love of money increase with the possession, it must be harder for a rich man to give than a poor man; but the need of money is in the degree that a man hath it not, and therefore there is more self-denial in giving mites out of mites, than pounds out of pounds. The million given is of course missed from possession, but not from use. There is abundance

left ; abundance for food and raiment and shelter, abundance for necessaries and conveniences and luxuries, abundance for a man's own self and for all that are dependent upon him, abundance for a man's whole life. The mite given is missed from the table and wardrobe and dwelling ; and parted with, there is left—not abundance, but want. It follows, then, that the greatest offerings are the gifts of the needy, and that the most generous benefactors are not the rich, but the poor. In judging of our own offerings, and of the offerings of others, we must not look at the commercial value of that which is given, but at its relation to that which is left behind. Riches of liberality may therefore be connected with deep poverty. If some of Christ's poor gave more and begged less, they would have less need to ask alms.

2. We learn further that grief need not hinder giving. The child of sorrow doubly needs the returns which acts of piety and charity invariably bring. The mourner is, however, too often self-enclosed. It is worthy of remark that in the writings of the New Testament, widows are specially named, as those who ought to be "well reported of for good works," as "having brought up children, lodged strangers, washed the saints' feet, relieved the afflicted, and diligently followed every good work."¹

3. And shall we not be taught by this incident to learn well-doing from each other? The Great Teacher bids his disciples learn from this certain poor widow. He makes her a kind of object-lesson. Thus many who cannot speak may teach. They may teach by what they are, and do, and give. While therefore we search the Scriptures, and wait upon all the ordinances of God, let us at the same time open our eyes, and see what those around us are doing and giving, that we may be provoked unto love and to good works.

¹ 1 Timothy v. 10.

4. And let us learn to act as under our Great Master's eye. He sees us come into the house of prayer, and he observes us retire. He knows how often we are present, and at what hour. He sees the sacrifices which we bring, and the spirit in which we present them; and he is acquainted with all of spiritual blessing which we receive. He knows us also individually, the rich and the poor, the wife and the widow. He hears our words and sees our deeds, and is acquainted with all our ways. He knows all we give to the treasury of his Temple, and all we have to call our own after we have given. And he *speaks* of you, it may be to his glorified saints and holy angels, but certainly before the face of his Father. And what can he say of you? We have heard what he said of this certain poor widow. What has he to say of us? There is something to be said about that which we cast into his treasury, and that which Jesus would say about it would be full of truth. What would the truth be, the whole truth? Whatever the whole truth may be, he sees and knows it perfectly. He who knows how much I am loved, knows how I love; he who knows all that I receive, and how I receive, knows what I give, and in what spirit. It is possible that my very gifts to his church may grieve him. Not that he is hard to please; he waits, looks, longs to delight in the doings of his disciples. Their good works may be concealed like violets in the tall grass of the forests, but he will scent their fragrance; they may be feeble as the newborn infant, but he will rejoice over them as over the bright beginning of blessed life; they may be imperfect as some flower or fruit in a formative state, but he will see the end from the beginning; they may wear an appearance of evil, but he will look deeper than the surface; they may be condemned by his disciples, but they shall be approved by himself, and he will show to the

universe that he is not unrighteous, to forget any work of faith or service of love.

And does my Saviour know all that I cast into his treasury, and all that I keep back? all that I say I will do, and all that I really do? I may well blush for the past and for the present,—but what for the future? Let me try to lean on Jesus' bosom, and regulate my heart's beatings by his own; then shall I say, as I sometimes rise and look into his loving face—

“All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be for ever thine.”

And now that we proceed to collect money to remove the debt which remains upon this house of prayer, let me beg you to apply the principle we have propounded. The widow will give, as a follower of one put forward for an example by our Saviour,—the poor widow her mites, the rich her abundance. The wife will give, in token of her gratitude that she is not a widow. The husband will give his thank-offering that his life has been redeemed from destruction, and that the home which he lights with his love is not dark and desolate. The child will give his offering of gratitude that his mother is not a widow, and that he is not fatherless. Every Christian will give, in gratitude to that Redeemer who gave himself for us. If the pictures of the Levitical economy trained this poor widow to such liberality, what ought to be the effect of the realities of the dispensation under which we live? We have not a Redeemer in promise, but a Saviour enthroned; not an atonement in symbol, but an atonement finished; not a priesthood in men, but a priest in the Son of God; and we have many other good things, not in shadow, but in reality and in substance. Have these good things been found in the house of prayer? Then now, in the house of prayer, and for the house of prayer, freely give.

A CHILD'S ACCOUNTABILITY.

"Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right."—PROVERBS xx. 11.

IT has often been said that the Bible recovers lost truths, as well as lost souls. Facts and doctrines, principles and motives, precepts and prohibitions, of essential importance to man, have been let slip; and these the sacred Scriptures recover. This restoration is not, however, effected for the mere sake of having these truths present with us, but on account of their influence upon the children of men. The recovery of lost truth is indeed one means of restoring lost souls. It bears the same relation to the human spirit, which the advent of a safe guide, to a man lost in the wilderness, would sustain to that man's safety, or which food, brought to one perishing with hunger, would bear to that man's continued life. It is not like the restoration of some ancient piece of architecture, the recovery merely of beauty and sublimity; but, we repeat it, like a guide in a wilderness, as food in famine, and as light in darkness; it is the restoration of that which is useful and essential. This function of the Scriptures is indicated in the use of sundry particles of speech, with which many of the statements of Scripture are prefaced. The words "verily" and "but" are of this class, and the first word of the text,

"even." The truth of this passage is a lost truth. That human beings are early accountable, and early assume a decided character, is evident to reflection and observation; but men do not see that they do not observe, and this fact, instead of being recognised, is fearfully forgotten. Apart from the teaching of Scripture, it is a lost truth, that a child is known by his doings.

In using the Scriptures, let us remember that while the Bible tells us new things, and repeats things well-known, it also restores to us lost truths.

Let us lay hold of the forgotten truths recovered by this text.

"Child" means a son or daughter under parental control. "The child is not;" "Do not sin against the child;" "Pure" signifies apparently good, and "right" means really good.

In expounding this text we remark—

I. The actions of children become, in process of time, their own doings.

Children move before they act, and they live, as mere animals, before they act spiritually and morally. The crying of an infant, its struggling in the arms of its mother or nurse, its seizure of things within its reach, are movements rather than actions; but in process of time the child acts. All its movements become conduct, the result of a determination to behave itself in a particular way. This is what is meant by "his doings."

1. An act which we are justified in describing as right or wrong, and which we can lawfully call the act of an accountable individual, must be performed by a being endowed with the following capacities: He must be able to conceive the act before its performance, mentally to see the thing done, before doing it. He must be capable of

¹ Gen. xxxvii. 30.

² Gen. xlii. 22.

appreciating motives for and against the action. He must know good and evil. He must have the power of saying, 'I will' and 'I will not.' If a man do what he does not will to do, what he cannot morally estimate, and what he cannot conceive, then, speaking morally and spiritually, that act is not his doing. The doings of an individual are those acts which he rationally and intentionally performs.

2. A child, in course of a few years, exhibits the capabilities of which we speak. The age at which this capacity is generally possessed, we know not; perhaps some children have it earlier than others. It is not, moreover, in all children equally manifest, and it may exist before it is recognised by men; but in process of time, during childhood, the human being becomes able to think and judge and will, to approve and disapprove actions.

3. Then it is, when conduct is designed and judged and willed by himself, that the actions of a child are his doings. As an animal, the child passes from being fed to feeding himself, and from being carried to running alone; and in like manner, spiritually, he puts forth powers which have been dormant, and passes from being acted upon to acting for himself. He now performs the functions of a rational creature; he begins to say, 'I will' and 'I will not,' 'I did it' and 'I did it not,' not as an echo, but as a voice; he acknowledges acts done by himself as his doings, and his actions are traced by others to principles and to volitions within himself.

II. When the actions of children become their doings, the children are recognised as accountable.

During the early part of a child's life, it knows neither good nor evil. At length it discerns right and wrong, and chooses in particular actions, or generally, the good or the bad way. When this discernment and choice commence, the child "is known."

1. God recognises the child as the author of its own actions; he sees the doings of the child spring from a motive and principle within. All its actions are, by his omniscience, traced to some inner spiritual spring of conduct. He now holds the child guilty for its transgressions of his law. The curse of his law is allowed to rest on the head of the guilty child. The child is now exposed to punishment; and to escape punishment, a dispensation of mercy to that individual child is necessary. Had the child died before knowing good or evil, then, on the basis of that atonement which is sufficient for all, it would have inherited eternal life; but now it needs an individual application of that atonement to its own case. Conversion is also necessary to that child's happiness and righteousness. It has entered on an evil way, and needs to be turned from that path into the way of righteousness. So that God's treatment of the child recognises the child's doings. As a sick child is known to its physician, or as an infant criminal is known to the administrators of our laws, so is every child known to God. And the reverse of this is true. When a child, sanctified from its first life, or early converted, lives in the fear and love of God, that child is recognised as such. "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me."¹

2. The god of evil knows, by the doings of children, with whom and with what he has to do.

He cannot, as God, search the heart; but he is by personal observation, and by the aid of his agents, acquainted with the doings of children, and hereby he is informed of their principles, tastes, inclinations, and character. He cannot act on the spirit before the paths of the senses have been opened and made plain; but he does know when he may

¹ Proverbs viii. 17.

begin to tempt, and how soon he may hope to devour. Think of him as the adversary of the child, studying the child's nature that he may know best how to injure it; commanding other evil spirits and wicked men to aid him in his malicious work; casting off the apparel of darkness and putting on raiment of light, that the child may be deceived by outward appearances; taking out of the child's mind words of truth and goodness, sown as godly seed by parental love or Christian charity; telling the child lies on all manner of subjects, so as to cause the child to stumble; exciting the child to disobey the will of God; placing every possible inducement to the commission of evil in the child's path; and waiting as a dragon, a serpent, a lion, a murderer, for the best opportunity of destroying the child; waiting, with knowledge of the child, with knowledge of its path, and lying down, and of all its ways, so that the lion knows whither to go, and the serpent where to lie hid, and the murderer the best spot for destroying his victim.

3. The angelic inhabitants of heaven recognise children in their ministrations. Ishmael was thus known by the Angel of the Lord, when cast out from Abraham's tent, and placed by his mother under a tree in the wilderness to die. And Christ appears to refer to this fact, when he says, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."¹ Christ is here, we think, contradicting the notion, that angels ministered only to persons of distinction. And his words are, in our ear, as if he said, Despise not children, and despise not those who are modest and retiring as children. These, and not merely those whom you call great, are ministered unto by angels; yea, by angels round and near

¹ Matthew xviii. 10.

the throne, whose eyes are ever upon God, and upon whose faces falls the light of the divine countenance.

On one point we are certain. A child who has been treading an evil way, and who repents, is known to the angels,—they have rejoiced over him, sung over him, praised God on his account ; and a child who is an heir of salvation is known to the angels,—they minister unto him, performing offices of kindness and services of charity, ordained by the God of their hosts, the God of love. Happy is the thought that in God's arrangements seraphs minister to children, and angels have charge of little ones, whose tender age many despise. This fact relieves the gloom, which the satanic temptation of children casts around their present state. They have a deadly foe, but there is an Almighty Saviour, who saith, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." ¹

4. Children are recognised as accountable, by their fellow human beings.

Children are known to children. As truthful or false, as dishonest or upright, as idle or industrious, as candid or deceitful, as generous or selfish, children are known to each other ; and children distinguish between accidents and volitions, between the movements of an infant and the doings of a child. By praise and blame, by approbation and disapprobation, they show that they know when their fellows in age become accountable. In like manner are children known to men. The training of the parent, the discipline of the school, the laws of the country, the opinions of society, all recognise the child in his doings. His doings stamp an image of himself on the minds and hearts of all with whom he has to do. And that image is a form more or less distorted, or a form more or less unmarred. His

¹ Mark x. 14.

doings manifest his disposition and his principles, as a young tree is known by its first fruits. Thus Samson was known as blessed of God;¹ thus Samuel was known as accepted for God's service;² and Obadiah as fearing God;³ and Josiah, at eight years old, as doing right in the sight of the Lord;⁴ and David as hoping and trusting in God;⁵ and Timothy as knowing the Holy Scriptures.⁶

Or, children are known as the children of Bethel were known, by their aversion from all that was right. We may remark, in passing, that there is something in children favourable to being known.

Thus children are known by their doings. When they begin to act, God holds them accountable; they are recognised by him, the moral governor, as moral agents. Satan tempts. Angels minister. Men judge, and avoid, or enter into fellowship. Children are known to their fellows, to men, to devils, to angels, and to God. They are known on earth, in hell, and in heaven. They are known, recognised by law and by gospel, and by all the dispensations of heaven to the children of earth.

What! then, can a child be held accountable by God? Even a child. Can a child be tempted of the devil? Even a child. Is a child ever the charge of angels? Even a child. Has a child a character among men? Even a child.

III. From the two facts—that the actions of children become, in process of time, their own doings, and that then God holds them accountable—we proceed to draw and exhibit certain inferences.

1. If a child be known by his doings, the evils of sin are not escaped by the childhood of the sinner. God does not hold him guiltless because he is a child. If old enough to

¹ Judges xiii. 24. ² 1 Sam. iii. 19. ³ 1 Kings xviii. 12. ⁴ 2 Chron. xxxiv. 2.

⁵ Psalm lxxi. 5.

⁶ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

think and feel, to hesitate and determine, if old enough to distinguish different motives, if old enough to choose his course, if old enough to act on his own volitions, God will regard him as a sinner, when he transgresses the divine law. The Supreme Lawgiver does not account the child a man ; he does not expect from him that which is the fruit of an experience and observation, which age only can supply, but he does hold a child guilty for refusing good and choosing evil. And this subjects the child to those penal consequences of evil, which, in this life, God connects with transgression, as well as to those more serious results which follow sin, after death.

The spiritual mischief which sin creates, is not prevented by the childhood of the sinner. Sin brings darkness into a child's mind, and disquiet into a child's heart, and gloom over a child's spirit. There are wages paid now, and paid in the spiritual condition of the early sinner, and those wages are death. As he sins, his understanding becomes alienated from God, his conscience seared, and his heart devoid of all feeling of sympathy with God.

And if any sceptically inquire, Are the evils of sin ever felt thus early? we answer, on God's authority, Even by a child.

2. If a child be known by his doings, he is, as a child, exerting influence for good or for evil. Every child either excites joy in devils or moves the angels to praise ; he is either for or against the mission of Christ to this earth ; he is either provoking God's anger or attracting God's love ; he is either cursing or blessing his fellow-creatures on earth ; he is either propagating evil, or sowing the good seed of holiness and truth. The measure of this influence is not so considerable as in the case of the adult ; but there is influence, for good or for evil. The young vine bears its first

ripe fruit, and the grapes are either gall or honey. The young fruit tree yields its first ripe produce, and the apples are of Sodom or of Paradise. The light of the morning may shine on a path which will lead the mariner to a rock of destruction, or guide him in a channel of safety. And can a child attract and repel hell and heaven? can a child injure or benefit his fellow-creatures? We answer, Even a child.

3. If a child be known by his doings, all the differences of human character are not traceable to education. Some of these differences may doubtless be thus explained; but not all, and not the greatest. There are innate dispositions,—dispositions which spring up no man knows how. Parentage may account for them, but not education. Subtle spiritual influences may produce them, but not our education. Education may cast down or raise up such inclinations, but they are within, before education can work.

Hence, the earliest doings of a child do not make manifest his education, but himself; he is what his doings make known. Some children spring toward God and heaven from the beginning of their life, and, like parasitical plants, seize objects by which to climb. Other children strike out laterally, and rest amid things merely terrestrial, like those tribes of creeping plants, which seek only enough of sun and air to enable them to live, while they lie on earth's dust or sod.

And can what is within a child be thus early known? Yes, even a child.

4. If a child be known by his doings, the character of the future man is often indicated by the character of the present child.

What manner of man shall this child be? is a question which every true parent has often asked. And wherein

consists the answer? The reply is suggested by what the child now is. A child really moving in the way in which he should go, will not, when he is old, depart from it. A child treading an evil way will, as a man, be found in the same vicious path, unless a special dispensation of divine mercy convert him. The tempers and dispositions which become habitual to the child, are rooted in the man. So that, if the earliest actions of children be observed, they will indicate the character which the child so constituted will form. Education makes, we allow, a mighty difference. But even education, in one large department of its service, can but train what is already within the child's nature.

The birth of the character is of far more moment than the birth of the body. And if parents were given to minding spiritual things, they would be far more anxious about the soul and spirit than the body. But many parents weep over a deformed body, who have no tears for a deformed spirit, and many rejoice over a perfect bodily shape, when they have no gratitude for a correct temper, and a virtuous disposition, and a heart sanctified from its birth.

5. If a child be known by his doings, God does not treat a generation of children *en masse*, but individually. There is a personality about every child. His activity, and his doings, and his works, and his aims, are his own. The countenances and voices of children may be regarded as the outward expression of this spiritual fact. Children's countenances and voices are not alike. The faces and voices of the members of the same family are different, and there is a wider distinction between those of the members of different families. Now what is individual is recognised by God. There is not a special dispensation to every child,—all come under common laws; but there is a personal recognition. The talents of each child, the advantages

and disadvantages, and the acts of each child, are noticed by God. And God weighs the spirits.

This is one of the functions of Omnipotence, to govern individuals and multitudes, to manage the vast, and attend perfectly to the minute.

6. If a child be known by his doings, one test of character is universally applied by the Judge of all. The Saviour, when cautioning his disciples against false prophets, said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits."¹ The Apostle James, when discriminating between a dead and a living faith, said, "I will shew thee my faith by my works."² The Apostle Paul represents the decisions of the final judgment as according to that a man hath done, whether good or bad. And Jesus Christ, in his representations of the judgment-day, gives great prominence to the doings of the judged. Our text tells us that a child is known by his doings. The child and the man are under one lawgiver, are amenable to the same law, are exposed to the same kind of punishment, and will stand together at the same judgment-seat. A child's work may be pure or impure, right or wrong, in the same sense in which the work of a man may be clean or unclean, and his conduct obedient or disobedient to the will of God.

We say, then, if a child be known by his doings, the evils of sin are not escaped through the childhood of a sinner; every child is exerting an influence for good or for evil; all the differences of character are not traceable to education; the character of the future man is indicated by the character of the present child; children are governed by God personally; and one test of character is universally applied.

The application of this text is chiefly to children, and to their parents, guardians, and benefactors. But there is one

¹ Matt. vii. 16.

² James ii. 18.

solemn fact suggested by the text, of universal importance. A child is known by his doings, and how much more a man? In the case of the child the formation of the character is in process; but in the case of the man the character is fixed. Now if the man be ungodly, this fact wears a fearful aspect. Hell is in no doubt about him, and devils know he is on their side; his doings favour hell, and array themselves against heaven. God is angry with him every day. He is under the curse and condemnation of the law which he has broken. In heaven he is known as an impenitent prodigal son; and on earth his influence is, to blot what is pure, to damage what is right, to diffuse defilement, and to spread unrighteousness, in the degree of the evil that dwells within him, and according to his opportunity of acting upon others. It is fearful to be so known. To be recognised on earth as an accomplice of thieves and murderers, would be disgrace and misery; but to be known as on the side of evil, as hell embodies it, this is shame unutterable.

Doubt not the fact, that you are known. Whither can you flee from God's presence? The devil goes about as a roaring lion, and he has under his control principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places, and he is said to work in all the children of disobedience. And where can you live and remain unknown to your fellow-men? You are known. Hell knows you as stubble for its fires. Heaven knows you as chaff which the divine husbandman will drive away. And earth knows you as one whose doings are neither pure nor right.

But, children, you are known. You are conscious that you act from motives, that very different motives are present to your mind, and that you make choice of one motive, and act under its influence. Now according to the kind of motive from which you act, is the character of your conduct. God

always sees the motive, and does not get his information by your outward deeds. Your whole spirit is before him, like a clock without a case, in which not only the hands are shown, but the spring and wheels by which those hands are moved. And then, as, in a clock with covered works, men judge of the works by the accuracy or inaccuracy of the hands; so your fellow-men, although they cannot know you as God knows you, by looking into your heart, yet know what your heart is likely to be, by your doings. Children, you are known. Never forget to whom you are known, by what you are known, and what is known concerning you. If not right, think of your position,—guilty before God.

Parents and benefactors of children, settle it in your minds that a child is known. Let not this truth be lost to you. Recognise it in your sympathies, in your efforts, and in your prayers. All but your infant children have already taken their stand in the great battle between light and darkness, evil and good, Christ and Belial, hell and heaven. They are not neutral, they have already taken a side. Which side is it? Whose side is it? Christian parents, are your children with you, or against you?

To the whole audience we say, it is known that much of the work of all children is neither pure nor right. "The imagination (fabrication, working) of man's heart is evil from his youth."¹ Men "go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."² There is not a perfectly righteous child, not one. None can say, 'I am pure, I am free from all sin.' And some children very early go very far astray. The parents who care for the doings of their children are very few, and the large multitude of children rise up unchecked in impure doings, and untrained in works that are right. This is a terrible evil. If the generation just rising were

¹ Gen. viii. 21.² Psalm lviii. 3.

consumptive, or leprous, were deaf, dumb, or blind, were afflicted with some deformity or disease, the affliction would be the theme of universal conversation, and the topic of every public pen. In every house there would be sorrow, and in many a now prayerless heart there would be prayer. But because the spirit is affected, and because the disease is sin, few care for the malady, or make it the burden of their prayer. And this is a fearful evil. But hear good news: there is a Saviour for every sinful child. May our children know him, and find in such blessed knowledge everlasting life!

XXX

EARLY PIETY.

"And that their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it."—DEUT. xxxi. 13.

SOME time ago there passed into the skies, one of the best pastors' wives the church of Christ has known. A short time before she died, she requested her husband to pray for their children, and he knelt by the bedside of his departing wife, and asked God for their early salvation. When he had finished, the dying mother began to speak to the Saviour, saying, "Yes, now Jesus, now take them to thy love. Some children are converted early, let mine be—Paul, and Cecil, and baby."

This dying mother's prayer represents our subject—the early salvation of the young, or piety and godliness in children. Before touching this topic, I may say that the departed saint, of whom I have spoken, had been an exemplary Sabbath-school teacher, before she had been called to the duties and responsibilities of a minister's wife. The sphere of her labour, for some years, was the girls' school connected with the Bloomsbury Chapel. Though living four miles from the school, she was always in time, and usually the first teacher present. Her lessons were thoroughly studied, and numerous note-books remain, to

testify to her assiduity and skill. Each Tuesday in the week was set apart for this purpose; and finding that the reading of the Bible in French led her to see the force of many passages, which, through familiarity with the words in the English version, escaped her attention, she resolved to master the original Greek. Twelve of her former scholars have united themselves to the church of Christ with which her school was connected, and ascribe their conversion to our departed friend's instrumentality.

But I am not here to eulogize the dead. I have come to quicken and to encourage those who are not yet resting from their labours, but who are in the midst of their work as Christian instructors of the young.

Godliness in children is accounted by Christians generally to be extraordinary, or at least uncommon; and perhaps there are but few godly children. Compared with the number of children who are blest with godly parentage, and taught in Christian schools, and instructed by various agencies to read the Scriptures, and compared also with the number of children who are present when the public ordinances of Christ's church are administered, the children who manifest true piety are certainly not many. Whether the proportion is less, or greater, than the proportion of adults who are godly, compared with those who, favoured with religious advantages, remain ungodly, I am not prepared to state; but the point to which we would call attention is this, If our observation be accurate, Christian parents and teachers and pastors do not, with sufficient confidence, look for, or expect to find, godliness in children. Altogether misinterpreting, as we think, the words, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he shall not depart from it,"¹ they do not look for the highest results

¹ Proverbs xxii. 6.

of religious teaching while the pupil is yet young, but appear to think that even God bids the parent and teacher wait for the results of their labours until advanced life. But is this waiting required of us? If we employ those means which are divinely ordained for the conversion of human beings and for spiritual edification,—employ them, I say, in our efforts on behalf of children,—why should we not expect immediate and early results? We admit that the Scriptures say more of early depravity than of early piety, and we allow that the cases of decided godliness in children, which the sacred Scriptures bring forward, are exceedingly few; still the little that is said, and the cases that are presented, (taken in connexion with the character and object of the dispensation of the Gospel), seem at least calculated to lead us to look for positive piety, in some of the multitude of children taught in Christian homes and schools, and trained to attend the ordinances of religion. We admit further, that the development of the spiritual and moral nature is very imperfect in children, that their self-knowledge is exceedingly small, and their sense of sin shallow and superficial, and that their power to comprehend the doctrines and to appreciate the provisions of the Christian economy, is very feeble; but all this affects only the particular development of godliness, and should not prevent our looking for piety in some sort or form of development. As the acorn, when first quickened into life, is very different from the sapling, and as the sapling is very different from the old oak, so a godly child is not exactly like a godly youth, nor is he the counterpart of a godly man. But then, just as the oak sapling possesses the characteristic qualities of oak trees, so the godly child will have all the essential properties of godliness, although the development will be modified by the conditions and idiosyncracies of childhood itself.

Upon no theory of Christian doctrine with which we are acquainted, is childhood excluded from the experience and practice of godly life. According to the extreme Calvinistic theory, particular persons are elected to eternal life, and all others are reprobated, that is, set apart for damnation. But who has told us that none who die in childhood are chosen, or that the election of the elect is never made evident and sure, while the elect are yet young? This theory ignores, moreover, the responsibility of man with respect to faith and repentance, and represents him as literally and absolutely passive in salvation, like clay in the hands of the potter. But if all this were true, are we justified in concluding that the Great Worker invariably defers working the salvation of the individual, until human nature has passed through the earlier stages of existence? Now, if the existence and manifestation of godliness in children be consistent with what is termed high Calvinism, there is certainly nothing in moderate Calvinism which excludes the idea of infant piety. I say moderate Calvinism, which excludes reprobation and includes election, but at the same time puts prominently forward the truth, that it is the duty of every man who hears the gospel, to repent and to believe the gospel. If a child be capable of understanding the gospel, then it is his duty to believe the gospel; and a moderate Calvinist may, in harmony with his system, look for true godliness in children, with a hope as strong as that with which he looks for true godliness among men. According to the Arminian theory, men are saved irrespective of any election of grace, by their own voluntary and independent application to Jesus Christ. Now this system of doctrines may seem, more than any other, to favour the expectation of beholding true religion in children; and for this reason, it is more hopeful towards human nature,—and certainly

there is more natural promise of piety in children than in adults. We may mention further, that according to the baptismal regeneration theory, the infant is saved in baptism ; and if saved in infancy, we may expect to see active piety so soon as it can be developed.

Godliness in children is, then, in perfect accord with those theories of Christian doctrine which we have named, nor are we acquainted with any system of doctrine, or with any theory of religious life, which even tends to check the hope of seeing children godly. In the present state of human nature, the two fundamental principles of religious life are repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ ; and there is nothing in childhood, which prevents repentance and faith becoming living and abiding sources of action in children.

We have already admitted that a child's knowledge of sin is necessarily small, that its sense of sin is feeble, and its sorrow for sin shallow. But then it must be remembered that, comparatively speaking, the actual transgressions of most children are but few, and that godly sorrow is a slow growth, even in the adult convert. Moreover, the genuineness of repentance is entirely independent of the number and of the character of the sins to be repented of, and equally independent of the degree of regret and self-chiding which are experienced. How slight is the deviation from the main line at what are termed the points of a railway junction ! and yet a divergence, almost imperceptible at first, leads to a terminus, far away from that into which the metals of the trunk line would have conducted the train. The tiny daisy as really turns its face to the sun, as the tall and stately sunflower. A drop of water from the snow which melts on the grass-blade, as it grows upon the bank of the glacier stream, as really finds its way to the ocean, as the

waters which rush from beneath the glacier itself. The grain of gold-dust is as really precious metal as the bar of gold. True life is as really in the germ or in the fœtus, as in the full-grown animal or tree. The tears of the tiny infant as effectually lave the eye, as the tears of a full-grown man. We are too apt to apply the standard of quantity to spiritual things. Thus prayers are estimated by their length or frequency, and pecuniary gifts by their commercial value, and service by the time devoted to it. It is quite true that the tears of a child are not continuous—

"The tear on childhood's cheek that flows,
Is like the dewdrop on the rose."

It is true that the sighs of a child are not heavy; they are not, as in the soul of manhood and womanhood, ocean waves, but they are rather like the ripple upon the waters of some sheltered lake. It is true that the emotions of a child are not the hardy blossoms of a sturdy fruit-tree, but the tender and delicate bloom of a tree that has as yet yielded little more than promise of fruit. Nevertheless, that blossom, which winds will tear and shake, is the out-flowing of life; that ripple on the lake shows susceptibility in the water towards its sister element, air; and those dewdrop tears show that earth and heaven, man and God, are working upon the child's nature. The hands of the infant united, as we have all seen them joined in the familiar statue of Hannah's child, and in the pictorial representations of the infant Samuel, may express as real a repentance, and may as distinctly appeal to heaven, as the Publican's smiting upon his breast, and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" If the understanding of a child be less enlightened, the soul is more sensitive; if the judgment be less formed, the conscience is more tender; if there be but little strength of purpose, the heart is less hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

And what shall we say of faith in relation to a child's religious capacity? As knowledge of sin is essential to repentance toward God, so knowledge of Christ is essential to faith in Jesus. But with how little knowledge may a man believe and be saved! To know that God has sent his Son to be our Saviour, that God's Son's name is Jesus, that he was wounded for our transgressions, and that he died for us, and that if we call upon him, and commit ourselves to him, we are saved, is all that is essential to salvation.

It is instructive to observe how limited was the knowledge of the apostles in their early following of Christ. Jesus said to Peter, after he had confessed "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."¹ Now at this time Peter knew only that Jesus was the Christ. He did not even know that the Christ must suffer and die, and be glorified. Yet we should all say that Peter was a Christian, that he was "godly," and "converted," and "saved," when Jesus said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona."

Now there are persons who appear to think that the comprehension of the theology of Christianity, or of the philosophy of the atonement, is essential to its efficiency, and that therefore children are incapable of faith. We hold a totally different opinion. Much that is called theology and philosophy on this subject, is neither divine revelation

¹ Matthew xvi. 16-19.

nor sound human wisdom, and we devoutly wish that much which is presented to us, as an explanation of the atonement, had never been put forth by lip or pen or press. We believe that it is possible to accept all the intended benefit from the sin-offering of the Saviour, without comprehending or knowing even all that God has spoken on the topic. To know that Christ died for the ungodly, and that Jesus died for us, is all the knowledge of the atonement that is essential to salvation; and none can deny that a little child is capable of such knowledge. That subsequent sense of mystery, which leads us men to look for explanations, has nothing whatever to do with the efficacy of the sacrifice of the Son of God. On the contrary, as many dyspeptic persons are robbed of nutriment from the food which they eat, by reading books upon digestion, so many Christians are deprived of much comfort from "the precious blood of Jesus," by their everlasting 'Why?' and 'How is it?'—and by their not receiving the kingdom of heaven as a little child. "A little child." Yes, a little child, who feels the meaning of those words, "for us," in the phrase, "Christ died for us,"—the child who can say, Father goes to work 'for' me, and, Mother has made herself so tired 'for' me, can attach a sufficient meaning to the words 'Jesus died for us,' to qualify him to believe on that Jesus for the saving of the soul.

It is quite evident that children are capable of imbibing sufficient knowledge of Christ, and of possessing an adequate sense of need of Christ; and if this be evident, there can be no question as to reliance and trust, which are in most children characteristic qualities. So far, then, as the vital principles of godliness are concerned, there is nothing in childhood to prevent their entrance, or to hinder their power and full development.

What is there then to prevent our looking for true god-

liness in those children who are the subjects of early Christian training, and the objects of parental and benevolent intercession?

Is a child too insignificant to find a place in the mind and in the heart of our Father in heaven? Is the sin-offering which Jesus in his own person has presented, limited to the youth and adult? Is the Saviour unwilling to be followed by children, or to receive them as his care and charge? How natural for the Christian parent to bring his children to the Redeemer; and can the parent on this errand be unwelcome? Does the mission of the Holy Ghost include only those whose years are mature? Is the word of the truth of the gospel too hard for a child? Are the privileges of a saved state, and its duties, above and beyond the sphere of childhood?

If decided piety be within reach of a child, how is it that the absence of godliness from children does not more distress us, and that piety in children is not more our aim and hope, and that it is not more frequently the burden of our prayer? Why, as some, always suspect a child who professes to be godly? Why exclude children from fellowship with our churches, and from the table of the Lord? By what authority is the rite of confirmation in the Church of England delayed until after fourteen years of life, and why is the enjoyment of the privilege of church membership among Nonconformists equally postponed?

Because godliness is not looked for in children; it is not seen where in many cases it exists; and the signs of it are not trusted when they are clearly manifest.

It would be interesting and instructive to inquire into the evidence of godliness in children, but we must content ourselves with a few remarks. True godliness in children is childlike. The ability to talk religiously is no sign of early piety. Speech seasoned with religious phrases and

with texts of Scripture, may be a mere matter of taste, or may spring from a desire to please Christian kindred and friends, or from a wish to be noticed, and to receive attention from particular persons. Further, the profession of piety is no proof of early godliness, for this may be mere imitation. The most certain sign of early piety, is that which is called in Scripture "doing that which is right in the sight of the Lord." "By their fruits ye shall know them."¹ Godly conduct is godliness outside, and it proves the existence of godliness within. But the point to which we would call attention is this, that very often a degree of perfection is looked for in a child, before his claim to be accounted godly is allowed, and a degree of maturity is required, which is not demanded from an adult professor of religion. The waters of the Gulf Stream, (which, in or near the Gulf of Mexico, are of an indigo-blue,) are said to be so distinctly marked, that their line of junction with the common sea-water may be traced by the eye. Often one half of a vessel may be seen floating in the Gulf Stream water, while the other half is in the common water of the sea; so sharp is the line, and such the want of affinity between those waters, and such the reluctance, so to speak, on the part of the Gulf Stream to mingle with the common water of the sea. In like manner, through much in a child's conduct that is disobedient and unloving and godless, may be sometimes seen a stream of obedient, loving, and Christian action, proving that a fountain of living water has been opened in the heart, and affording reason to hope that in due time, as this fount is made deeper and wider, the pure stream will expand, until it covers the entire outer life. Or, to adopt another illustration, we sometimes see in a little child the moral fighting of a little soldier, and the moral courage of a little hero. With a disposition

¹ Matthew vii. 20.

to do wrong, and with many temptations to that which is evil, the child fights with all his power of heart and arm. He is sometimes defeated, but still life, even to that little one, is a battle—a hard and honest struggle. The children who are marked out by these observations, exhibit the most trustworthy signs of true godliness. If life be all peaceful and calm and united, it is difficult to say what of apparent godliness is traceable to constitution and temperament and imitation. But if there be a stream within a stream, or if there be a hard and heavy conflict, then we may say, Here is the finger of God, here is the hand of Jesus Christ, and here is the workmanship of the Holy Ghost.

Godly children are God's workmanship, created by Jesus Christ, and if we would be the means of leading children into true godliness, we must bid them look to our Saviour Jesus. I say *to* him, not *at* him. Some who have to do with the religious instruction of children, require them to look *at* Christ instead of *to* him. There is a vast difference between these things. The child looks *at* the Queen, when he goes to see her proceed in state to open the Parliament; but he looks *to* his mother, when he relies on her for the supply of his daily wants. We look *at* the statue, say of Jenner or of Abernethy, but we look *to* our medical attendant for advice and healing. We look *at* Pitt or Fox, as they now stand before us in marble or stone, but we look *to* the Prime Minister of the day for the conduct of our national affairs. We Christians know for ourselves, that it is not by looking *at* Jesus, as at a great sight, that we are saved, but by looking *to* him, as to a loving, personal Redeemer; therefore, in speaking to children of the Son of God, it is important to speak of him, not as of a Being to be looked *at*, but looked *unto*. Need I mention the essential importance of prayer for the Holy Ghost to open the child's heart, and to reveal

the Saviour? What the exact connexion between such prayer and the salvation of souls may be, I cannot tell; but I do know that prayer for the conversion of particular individuals is sometimes followed by their salvation, and that no man is qualified to labour as a Christian teacher, unless his motto be, 'Labour and prayer;' not labour without prayer, or prayer without labour, but 'Labour and prayer.' In your labours and prayers, parents and teachers, aim at the present salvation of your children and scholars. They are responsible now. They are guilty before God now. They are in danger of perdition now. They may be saved now, and regenerated now, and forgiven now, and sanctified now, and they may live godly lives now. Let us work and pray, and look for godliness in children, in the children of our families and in the children of our schools.

I hear a voice from heaven saying, "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."¹ May this be your experience on a large scale!

A godly child is delivered essentially from the evil which blights and blasts humanity. A godly child is safe from all real future harm. A godly child has the chief need of its nature and state supplied. A godly child has received the best gifts which even God can bestow. A godly child is escaping much of the corruption that is in the world through lust. A godly child is being early qualified for usefulness to others. A godly child has entered upon eternal life.

Then gather the children together still. Instruct the

¹ Isaiah xlv. 3-5.

children still. Aim at the conversion to God of the children still. Teachers of schools, do your work with one heart and one soul. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."¹

¹ Psalm cxxxiii.

THE DUTIES OF A CHURCH TOWARD ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

" Do all things without murmurings and disputings :

" That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world ;

" Holding forth the word of life ; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."—PHILIPPIANS ii. 14-16.

IN avoiding evil, men often stop short of good ; and in pursuing that which is good, men frequently run into evil. Facts in illustration of this statement are abundant, abundant in history, and in the sphere of present observation and experience. The tendency of human nature to extremes is exhibited in the past, and is developed in the present circumstances of the church of Christ. We see Christian men run from some error in doctrine, and, in their zeal to reach the utmost point of distance, embrace another error ; they retreat from some real or supposed inconsistencies in action, and in effecting this retreat, trespass on forbidden ground, or neglect some prescribed duty. One illustration may be taken, bearing on the subject before us. All non-conforming churches repudiate the principles of the ecclesiastical parochial system, and hold

that it is contrary to the spirit of Christianity to require all persons, residing in a given district, to attend the ministrations of a Christian minister, of whose character and fitness for office they are not permitted to judge, and who is set over them by an authority against which they have no appeal; and Nonconformists seek not to constrain the attendance of persons at their places of worship, neither do they assert that the souls living in certain districts are confided by any earthly authority to their ministers, or by a heavenly commission entrusted to them alone. But in avoiding this Charybdis they have approached too near the opposite-Scylla. Thus they have, to a considerable and to a prejudicial extent, confined their sympathies and their efforts within the span of the roof under which they meet for worship. To fill a chapel, and to keep it full, has too often been their sole ambition. They have not sought to evangelize neighbourhoods. They have, in many instances, only laboured to keep in the fold those who may happen to come to their meetings, and they have not sufficiently sought to bring to their services those in whose midst they worship and reside. This we are disposed to regard as the opposite error to the parochial system. We admit that no ministry, however perfect, is adapted to all classes and conditions and characters. We see insurmountable obstacles to the complete localization of any one man's ministrations. To say to any man, 'Teach all that are willing to be taught in that neighbourhood, and lead their public worship,' is to bid him do what no man living can do. The truths of Christianity, although essentially the same, admit of varied expression. Some minds, moreover, have a strong affinity with a certain class of truths. Hence, in ministerial teaching, different preachers give prominence to different topics; and in speaking on the same topics, different ministers

exhibit them in varied aspects ; as the prismatic colours of the one element light are variously absorbed and exhibited, according to the constitution of the surface on which the light falls. Hence also, among hearers of the word, and among real Christians, there is an appetite not for truth simply, but a keen relish for a certain mode of presenting truth ; and an appetite not only for truth generally, but an intense hunger for particular doctrines. Unless this appetite be met, men cannot hear to profit. You will readily distinguish this religious taste from itching ears. Now, no one man can meet every kind of spiritual appetite. It is to be expected, therefore, that some persons live round about every place of worship, who will have to go to a distance before they can find the teaching that suits them. Similar remarks may be made concerning modes of worship. All this we not only admit, but justify. Yet this fact does not forbid efforts, to secure the attendance of all in a neighbourhood to whom a given ministry is adapted ; neither should it hinder other efforts, for the benefit of those who cannot profit from the ministry, or are disinclined to attend divine service in a particular place of worship.

The word "parish" interpreted etymologically, means "near the house." The places in which the early Christians met for worship were sometimes called, both by the Greek and Latin churches, "parishes." The word was at length, however, used to denote the territory or diocese of a bishop. At what time this application of the word was first made, we know not ; but we do know, that at the beginning of the seventh century the word "parish" meant a diocese. The origin of the present parochial system in England is not obscure. In the earlier ages of British Christianity, every man was at liberty to contribute his tithes to any church or priest he pleased to select, or to the bishop of the diocese.

Tithes, I may remind you, were enjoined by ecclesiastical law in the year 786. The first local division of parishes, corresponding to the existing parochial division, appears in laws enacted in the reign of Edgar and in the year 970. The parochial boundary was derived from the manorial boundary ; hence one manor seldom covers more than one parish, although in one parish there may be several manors. Lords of the soil built churches on their own estates, and then made laws to oblige their tenants to pay their tithes to those churches ; and the district so charged became ecclesiastically compact, and was called a "parish." Hence the intermixture of parishes on estates, and hence the allotment of certain pews in parish churches to certain houses in those parishes. This is the origin of the parochial system in England, and parish ministers have claimed for themselves, and others have claimed for them, the exclusive right of teaching the souls within such boundaries ; while Nonconformists, although denouncing the doctrine and avoiding the system, have practically yielded to the parish minister, if not an exclusive right, yet in some way or other a superior right ; and they have lived and laboured, too exclusively, we repeat, for those who may happen to enter their places of worship, and too little for the populations of localities. This state of things has, however, been disturbed by institutions of a comparatively modern date. The establishment and increase of Sunday-schools has constrained us to look at neighbourhoods ; the formation of Benevolent Societies has brought before us the wants of localities ; the origination of Christian Instruction Societies has obliged us to map out the vicinities of our houses of prayer ; daily-schools have secured the canvass of localities ; and County Associations have wrought to the same end. But even now our operations are not sufficiently local.

The place where a Christian church meets, may generally be supposed to be in the neighbourhood of the residence of the majority of that church. Now I wish to describe, under the guidance of the words read as my text, the relation and duty of a Christian church to the population living in the vicinity of its place of assembly. The text exhibits this relation and enforces this duty. The import of the words is clear, but the expansion of the separate phrases will help us in seizing the sentiment and doctrine. "Do all things," meet, conduct your worship, exercise discipline, transact all your church business. "Without murmurings," without muttering, without the expression of discontent, without grumbling. "And disputings," that is, contentions and needless scruples. "That ye may be blameless," that is, without defect and irreproachable. "And harmless," or sincere, unmixed in character, free from allowed vice and from deceit. "Without rebuke," that is, really right as well as outwardly fair. "In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation;"—"crooked," that is, hard to please, and "perverse," or perverted; "nation," that is, generation. The men of Paul's day were marked by the following features: each nation and sect considered its own institutions supremely excellent, each professed to combine all excellence within itself, each considered all others in darkness, and endeavoured to win universal favour. Such a generation must have been "hard to please" by the Christian sect, which aimed at comprehension without compromise. The Apostle adds, "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world." Among whom, not, Ye do shine; but, Ye must take care to shine. This seems most consistent with the context, which throughout is admonitory. "Lights of the world;"—this is explained by the next sentence, "holding forth the word of life." The gospel is the word of life, because it proclaims a divine provi-

sion for the restoration of life, and because it is the means of imparting life ; and this gospel, in its fruits and effects, is the light in Christians. This part of the passage may be rendered, Be conspicuous as the means of giving light to the world, exhibiting the word of life. By "the day of Christ" is meant, the day which will try every man's work ; the day of judgment by Christ, on which day Christ shall be glorified. Then, using the figure of a race, Paul expresses the hope that his labours may not prove useless to the Philippians in that day.

I. The relation of a church to a neighbourhood is that of salt to the land. A church owes to the people around it all that will destroy prejudice against Christianity, and all that will prepare and dispose men's minds to the reception of the truth. This is implied, nay, distinctly declared, in the text. 'You live,' said Paul to the Philippians, 'in an age hard to please, among a people whose minds are blinded by ignorance and perverted by error, who cannot see things as they really are. Then be blameless and harmless, give no cause of offence, commend yourselves to every man's conscience, let men have no ground for finding fault with you ; and if possible, win them to Christ by the exhibition of all that is lovely in Christian discipleship.' The Saviour had urged the same duty on his disciples in the following words : "Ye are the salt of the earth : but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."¹ In this passage reference is made, not to the domestic use of salt, nor yet to its sacred use, but to its employment for agricultural purposes. Salt had long been used as manure, it being accounted potent to destroy weeds and noxious insects, as also to moisten, to quicken, and to nourish the soil. In this sense, the character of Christ's

¹ Matthew v. 13.

disciples is the salt of the land. The figure is not exclusively scriptural. Greece was called, "The salt of the nations." But what did Christ mean? He meant to say to his disciples, 'Your characters must correct erroneous notions concerning me and my kingdom; hereby you must disperse prejudice, awaken attention, arouse the consciences of men, check sin, and keep from barrenness the field of Christian effort.' And Christ adds, 'Lose not a consistent character; if you do lose it, it will never be regained;' just as the salt which is at the edge of the salt lakes, by exposure to rain and sun, loses the saline quality, and men who go to gather salt, drive and walk over that, as over so much useless matter. "Ye are the salt of the land."

But how shall prejudice be dispersed, and men be favourably disposed to the truth?

1. By the irrefragable character of the individual members of a church. Consistency is Christian perfection; and consistency is the accordance of a man's words, deeds, and general character, with his profession. Every intelligent and true Christian professes to be in a state of education and of training, the end of which is perfect holiness. He does not say that he has already attained; but he declares that he follows after, that he is running in order that he may obtain, that he is fighting the good fight in hope of victory. Consistency requires that he should not allow sin, that he should not habitually and wilfully practise sin; consistency demands that he should resist temptation, lay aside the sins which easily beset him, and follow after holiness. So far as this state of things exists in a Christian, he is irrefragable, or to use the words of the text, he is blameless and harmless. And men may claim as much from professing Christians. Spotless purity and unblemished righteousness cannot be claimed by the world from the church; this is not professed,

but consistency is a just requirement. Every Christian has certain circles in which he moves, and in which he is observed. There is the domestic circle, in which the husband observes the wife, and the wife the husband; in which the parent observes the child, and the child the parent; in which the brother watches the sister, and the sister the brother; in which the servant observes the master, and the master the servant. There is the circle of acquaintance and friendship, in which family watches family, and individuals scrutinize individuals. There is the circle of business, in which tradesmen and customers, professional men and clients, watch each other. Now if any professed Christian have the reputation of being an unkind husband or an unsubmitive wife, a negligent parent or a disobedient child, a tyrannical master or a slothful servant, a gossip, a tattler, a busy-body, a cheat in business, a monopolist in trade or in any secular profession,—such a church-member creates and increases prejudices against religion, and he may be the occasion of finally closing men's hearts to the gospel of Christ. Call not such things as we have named, little things. If but dead flies, they cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, especially to those whose scent is keen in this direction, and who desire to find ground on which to condemn the ointment. If but a mote in a Christian's eye, it is large enough to attract more attention than a beam in a worldling's eye. This is proved by the fact, that a common excuse for the neglect of religion is the inconsistency of its professors. The allowed and habitual failings of Christians, have done more to impede the progress of Christianity than error, or even infidelity. I question whether, in proportion to sphere and opportunity, inconsistent professors are not of more injury to the church, than any other instrumentality which the devil employs.

2. Prejudice may be destroyed, and men be disposed to Christianity, by the peace, by the harmony, and by the brotherly love of a church. Diversities will be found even in the smallest religious communities—diversities of gifts, of attainment, of experience, and of character. Each member of any community will, moreover, be discovered to possess faults and defects peculiar to himself; and in proportion as individuals are active in a church, these failings will be developed. Similarity of opinion in all matters cannot therefore be expected, and if patience, forbearance, and brotherly love, be manifested, diversity will not involve discord. In music, distinct melodies breathed by different voices constitute full harmony. A church is at peace when there is no quarrelling, no angry contention, no sinful striving for power; and it is in harmony when all work together, when the younger submit to the elder, when the private members obey them that have the rule over them, when on great matters the consciences of individuals are one, and when on all indifferent matters the few will yield to the many, and the juniors yield to the seniors. Love reigns in a church when no one seeks his own, when each seeks the good of all, when if one suffer all weep, and if one prosper all rejoice,

But what has this to do with a neighbourhood? Much every way. It is known in a neighbourhood whether a church meets in anger and bitterness, or in harmony and love. Do you ask me how? "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter."¹ The stormy wind of strife cannot be confined. Its howl is heard, and its blast is felt, far off as well as near. And the balmy breeze of charity has

¹ Ecclesiastes x. 20.

an equally wide range ; it kisses the lips, and it fans the brow, of more than we can number. A divided church is known as such ; and in proportion as it is known, repels the peaceful and intelligent and generous. And a united and peaceful church is also known ; and by its good name invites men to lie down on its green pastures, and to walk by its still waters.

3. Men may be disposed to Christianity by the inviting aspect of the public worship and ministry of a church. The building in which Christians meet is of some importance. It should accord, in style and in dimensions, with the character and with the population of a neighbourhood. It should be pleasant to the eye, and commodious, so as to say to the people of a district, 'Come in, for yet there is room.' Over-crowded chapels are repulsive to those who are unaccustomed to public worship. An over-filled chapel is a voice from God, saying, "Lengthen thy cords." And if enlargement be impossible or undesirable, the building of another place of worship is a duty. Sufficient light and air, and all that can render our places of worship attractive, should also be provided. Alas ! the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. The theatre, the shop, the gin-palace, are made attractive, and men have themselves dwelt in ceiled houses, but God's house has often been suffered to lie waste. The mode of worship, too, is not of small importance. If there be music, it should be the best that can be obtained ; if there be reading, it should be the best reading of which a man is capable ; if there be prayer, it should be effectual and fervent ; if there be preaching, it should be the best and highest kind of teaching which the minister can supply. In one word, we must bring the alabaster box of spikenard very costly, and in all Christian service use it ; and then men, seeing

us give our best to Christ, will inquire, 'Who is this that commands the strength of our neighbours?' and they will come to us, saying, "Sirs, we would see Jesus."

4. Prejudice may be destroyed, and men disposed to Christianity, by churches forming benevolent institutions in their neighbourhood; and by churches having their representatives in institutions of a more general character.

Such institutions as the hospitals of any locality, should have the ministers of that locality among their governors, and, if possible, on their managing committees. And if Christian ministers have time to spare, why not be made guardians of the poor? To all the public institutions of a neighbourhood, Christian churches should, by the co-operation of some of their members, be manifestly allied. The salt must be scattered. It must not lie in heaps, else how can it benefit the land? Societies for the relief of the sick and of the poor, formed and worked by the members of a church, are of greater importance than connexion with more general institutions; and the value of day-schools is beyond price. By means of benevolent effort a church becomes known, the sincerity of that church's desire for the welfare of the neighbourhood is tested and proved, influence is gained, and thus the course of God's word is cleared of stumbling-blocks, that it may run and be glorified.

The miracles of Christ were performed exclusively in a sphere of benevolence. He did not work his wonders upon air, upon the sun, upon the moon, or upon the planets, but upon objects and elements and circumstances, with which were connected the comfort of men. Thus Christ opened the blind eye, unstopped the deaf ear, loosed the dumb tongue, healed the sick, cleansed the leper, raised the dead, and stilled the sea when the disciples thought they should perish. All this manifested benevolence, and partly through

this influence, the common people heard him gladly. The multitude cannot appreciate the conduct of a man who is a martyr to mere religious opinions ; but they can appreciate self-denial and kindness, in clothing the naked, in feeding the hungry, in ministering to the sick, and in relieving the fatherless and widow. And the use by Christians of their resources for this end, was surely intended to sustain the same position as the benevolent features of the miracles of Christ.

Christian brethren, be blameless and harmless and without rebuke ; be at peace among yourselves ; love one another with a pure heart fervently ; study whatsoever things are lovely and of good report ; to do good and to communicate forget not. Be to your neighbourhood as salt to the land, establish for yourselves a good savour, and let not that savour be lost. I entreat you, in the sight of God and of Jesus Christ, keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of Jesus Christ.

II. The relation of a church to a neighbourhood is that of light to the world. A church owes to its neighbourhood a distinct, prominent, and adapted testimony to truth.

This is taught in the words, "Shine ye as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." How can this be done?

1. By providing and sustaining an efficient ministry. A ministry is efficient, when it is adapted to any people, when the style of a preacher's thought and expression suit them, when the minister can convey ideas of religion to minds, and excite religious feelings in hearts. Should not a church consider a neighbourhood, as well as its own edification, in the choice of a pastor, and in his continuance? And perhaps, as a rule, what is efficient to a church is adapted to a large portion of a surrounding population. A church can provide an efficient ministry, by selecting such at the time of choice, by endeavouring to make the ministry efficient,

after it has been selected, through cordial co-operation with that ministry, and by hearty sympathy. And how is the ministry to be sustained? The temporal wants of a minister should be adequately supplied, so that he may be above carefulness as to the body. He is to be highly esteemed in love for his work's sake, he is to be obeyed, and his teaching is to be received with earnest heed. And how will this bear on a neighbourhood? By this means a minister is advertised in any locality. 'Who is this,' many will ask, 'upon whose services our neighbours so punctually and so regularly attend, of whom they speak so highly, and to the promotion of whose welfare and success they are so devoted?' And many will come to see the man, and when they see they will hear, and when they hear they may believe. Anything with a good reputation attracts. Let a church give its ministry a good character, not by word merely, but by deed, and let that ministry be really good, and hearers will be gathered, souls will be saved.

2. A church may testify to the truth, by every member ministering as he hath received the gift. Is one church member qualified for the business matters of a church? let *him* serve tables. Is another capable of teaching children? let *him* gather the young of the neighbourhood, and impart to them religious instruction. Is another gifted with powers of conversation? let *him* visit persons at their own houses, and speak to them of Christ. Can another preach? let *him* in the open air, in a dwelling-house, or in a house for teaching, gather the people, and declare to them the gospel. Is another able to lead social devotion? let *him* meet his fellow-members for prayer and supplication. Is another able to assist young and weak Christians? be it *his* work to gather the lambs in his arms. Some in every church are mothers; let them give themselves first to the training of

their own children, and then to the education of other families. Are any masters? let them teach their workmen and servants the way of life. And let every Christian do something, and that personally, for the testimony of truth in the neighbourhood. The deficiency of power in our churches is in the loss of single talents. It is worthy of remark, that Christ represents the slothful servant, not as having ten talents, or five, but one. We want the little that people (as an excuse for doing nothing) say they can only do; we want that little done. Alas, that office and organization are the scapegoat to those who neglect personal effort, and who shun personal responsibility!

3. A church may testify to the truth in a neighbourhood by cherishing and exercising in all things a spirit worthy of its vocation. A church consists of the professed sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. Let, then, those who constitute a church appear as God's children. Let them be separate in spirit and character and conduct from the children of the world. Let them be singular, standing out with prominence, and standing up with eminence, as those who have been adopted by God; let them avoid the concealment of their religion, and shun the appearance of being ashamed of Christ; let them be circumspect toward those that are without, and let them assume their right character as the sons of God. This will explain many of the doctrines and precepts, many of the promises and prophecies of the Christian dispensation; it will reflect Christ, it will expound the work of Christ, it will reveal God, and by contrast will show the fallen state of man. Oh! let your light shine before men. You have in the choice of a pastor provided a ministry which you have deemed efficient: then sustain it. You have founded some benevolent institutions: then uphold them, extend them. Some of you are at work:

work harder, and let all get to work. You are professedly the sons of God: be really so and evidently so. Hold forth the word of life, as the beacon on the rock holds out the light; shine ye as lights in the world; be living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. There are prejudices in your vicinity against Christianity and against your mode of confessing it: disperse these prejudices. There is an indisposition to listen to the truth: strive to remove that indisposition. There is ignorance: scatter that ignorance. There is evil of all kinds: overcome evil with good.

Continuing to employ Christ's own metaphors, we observe:

III. The individual ministers of any locality, so circumscribed as to admit of fellowship, are to that locality as separate stars in one constellation; and the churches of such a locality are thereto as so many golden candlesticks in one holy place. It is therefore the duty of ministers and churches, so situate, to exhibit their real and essential unity. The stars must (so far as sympathy is concerned) shine together. In this sense, when one rises all must rise, and when one sets all must set. The cloud that obscures one must seem to dim the lustre of all. One star may differ from another star in glory, but the smaller must not seek to eclipse the greater by their shadow, and the greater must not seek by their brilliancy to detract from the inferior. All such stars should shine with a blended and with a reciprocal influence, with such an influence as shall make them appear one cluster of illuminated bodies, and one assemblage of brilliant orbs. The candlesticks must stand together as employed in the illumination of one tabernacle. For one it must not be claimed, 'This is for the temple, and this alone,' but each must make room for others in the same holy place. One candlestick may have a larger number of branches, and

may really exhibit the greater light, but the light should be so blended as to render it hard to measure the precise amount which each yields. But to drop the figure, how is unity to be developed?

1. By ministers and churches guarding most carefully each other's reputation.

In the ministry let not the aged despise the young, and let the young respect the aged. Let not the unsuccessful be envious and jealous of the prosperous, and let not the prosperous be distant and cold toward the less favoured. Let none be ready to take up an evil report against his neighbour. Let no man set up his style and his mode of ministry as a standard, and condemn all other ministerial forms of address. We have, it may be, much to learn in this respect, especially in our own vicinities. It is less easy to love a ministerial brother than a ministerial foreigner, but such love is more sincere than professions of wholesale attachment toward men with whom we never come into contact. These remarks will apply to churches. Let church members generally beware of the practice of detraction towards sister communities. The manifestation of unity depends much on the avoidance of this sin. Character is impressions, and impressions are made by what ministers and churches say of each other. How can they be united, or even appear so, unless they possess and manifest a holy jealousy of each other's reputation? This spirit will show unity of heart.

2. Unity may be developed by co-operation for common ends. Some objects may be pursued most successfully alone, and we are disposed to guard most sacredly the independency of our churches; but in the circulation of the Scriptures, in some educational movements, in local tract distribution, in home and foreign missionary efforts, minis-

ters and churches can work together, and they should cooperate. To the tents of your tribe for fellowship and for worship and for individual edification; but to the open camp for your home and for your foreign missionary enterprises. This will make our tents appear as the separate dwelling places of one spiritual army. Hereby is exhibited unity of end.

3. Unity may be developed by the universal expression of pleasure in the prosperity of the successful, and by the universal utterance of regret in the adversity of the unprosperous. Hereby the unity of sympathy is manifested, for with this spirit shown forth, separate churches will appear as the members of one body. Using the term body with a wide signification, we may adopt the language of the apostle, and say, "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."¹

4. Unity may be developed by the contribution of assist-

¹ 1 Corinthians xii. 14-21, 25-27.

ance to all that need it. Hereby unity of interest is seen. This form of unity is beautifully developed in the following words, addressed to the church at Ephesus: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: from whom the whole body fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."¹

Brethren, I speak to you who are members of churches. Be the salt of the land, and the light of the world, and the golden candlesticks among which Christ walks.

I ask this for your pastor's sake. A Christian pastor is running a glorious race, and he is toiling in an illustrious cause. And what is his crown, and what his reward? Not your pew subscriptions; thousands of pounds per annum would not be accounted by him recompense and reward; grace has made his heart too large to be filled by money. Not your hospitality, and not your friendship; he seeks not yours, but you. Souls converted and educated are our crown, and the extension of Christ's kingdom is our

¹ Ephesians iv. 4-8, 11-13, 16.

reward. Unless these objects be gained, we run in vain, we labour in vain. Help your pastor, secure his crown, assist him in seeking his reward. Do you love him? thus prove your love. Do you appreciate his labours? let this be his recompense. In proportion to his usefulness will be his cup of sorrow, and his baptism of tribulation, and he will need bright prospects to sustain him. Bring the prospect of the future rewards of ministerial fidelity before him, and this will suffice. Should he go on working as a soldier wounded, yet fighting in the battle-field, this will stanch his bleeding wounds; or should he continue to toil as a labourer in a harvest-field, still reaping though smitten by a burning sun, this will revive his consciousness and renew his strength. "To rejoice in the day of Christ"! Many will weep, howl, gnash their teeth in that day; and to rejoice in one's own salvation will be no light honour, and no small privilege; but to rejoice then over souls won to Christ, this is to feel what angels experience when a sinner repents, this is to share in the satisfaction of God's Holy Spirit, this is to drink of Christ's own pleasure, this is to inherit the blessedness of God. But for one's work to suffer loss, to be oneself saved yet so as by fire, to save none by our preaching and praying, is to lose the abundant entrance, and to miss the emphatic "Well done." Let it be your pastor's fault, and not yours, if he be found in this position.

But I might appeal to your self-love, and entreat you, for your own sakes, to be as salt to this land, as lights to this part of the world. We could show you that, if you help your minister, you will share in his success; that his success will be yours, just as his labours and aims are yours; that if you minister as you have received the gift, you may expect to prosper, and that all such results are your own

present reward. I might also appeal to the claims of the generation amid which you live. It is a generation hard to please. Men are inquiring,—that is a good sign,—but inquiry makes them captious. Men are restless and fond of novelty, and they require that religious efforts should keep pace with the times. Barns of buildings, stereotyped religionism, will not suit this generation. And the minds of the people are perverted, and this too from the pure and scriptural principles of Nonconformity.

I might also appeal to the value of mankind. Men are dying, blinded by ignorance and fettered by prejudice, and in dying bodies are perishing souls. Will you let your neighbours perish without an effort to save them? God forbid!

But I hasten to urge higher motives. For Christ's sake, be ye the salt of the land, the lights of the world. In Christ's stead, I pray you. Christ humbled himself for you; then by that humiliation,—Christ lived on earth for you; then by that life,—Christ endured agony for you; then by that bloody sweat,—Christ died for you; then by that death,—Christ entered the grave for you; then by that burial,—Christ rose and ascended for you; then by his resurrection and ascension,—Christ acts as a priest and as a king for you; then by his advocacy and reign;—by all that Christ is to you, and by all that Christ has done for you, I beseech you, I adjure you, exert a Christian influence, and hereby seek to extend his kingdom in your vicinity. Do any ask what will be the circumstances of churches obedient to the text? I answer, They will be beautiful as gardens in a wilderness, they will be useful as streams in the desert, they will be conspicuous as mountains in a plain, and there green as Hermon, and stable as Mount Zion. They will be enduring in lustre as the seven lamps of fire which burn before the throne.

CHANGE AND CONTINUANCE.

Preached at Cheshunt College Anniversary, June 28th, 1860.

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away :

"But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."—1 PETER i. 24, 25.

“**W**HAT is wanting here?” said a courtier to an illustrious prince, as they stood together, the spectators of a most splendid triumph in the city of Rome. To him who spake, there appeared to be nothing wanting. The gaiety and joyousness and pomp and splendour of the spectacle were in his sight complete. The supreme power represented by the entire body of the senate was there. Music flowing from the fountains of various instruments was there. The spoils taken from the enemy, filling many carriages and piled upon movable platforms, were there. A victim ready for sacrifice, and a large company of priests and their attendants, were there. The ministers of justice, clad in official costume, and bearing the insignia of their office, were there. And there was the victorious general, attired in the triumphalia and crowned with laurels. He stands in a chariot drawn by four horses, and is attended by a noble, who holds over his head a diadem studded with

jewels. His children surround him, the officers of state follow, and the procession is closed by the legions, carrying branches of laurel, and wearing laurel-chaplets, and singing triumphant songs in praise of their general. And, "What is wanting here?" said a courtier to an illustrious prince. Mirth and song are here, the army is here, domestic life is here, religion is here, the state is here, victory is here, wealth is here. "What," answered the prince, as he watched the procession pass along, and in passing pass away, "What is wanting? This is wanting, *continuance*." The procession would pass along the appointed route, and then the body of senators would be dispersed, the musicians would cease from their performances, the spoils would be appropriated to public and private purposes, the sacrifice would be offered, the priests would return to their temples, the officers of justice would retire to the Forum, the chief personage in the triumph would cease to be an object of public attention, the legions would be dispersed, and the triumph would be a thing of the past. Now, a serious impression of all this led the prince, of whom we have spoken, to say, "One thing is yet wanting, and that is *continuance*." There was no continuance in the display and honour and pleasure of the triumph, and the absence of perpetuity detracted from the completeness of the honour and the perfection of the joy.

All thoughtful men feel seriously, if not sorrowfully, the temporary and changeful character of all the things which we see and handle on this earth. Where is continuance upon this planet? God has established the earth, and it abideth, but what beside abideth? Yea, even the earth is doomed to be burned up; and while it abides, great changes are continually occurring, even in the crust of the earth, and in the waters which fill its hollow places. And where continuance would be most valued, and where one should have

expected it, even there it is not. We are not much surprised that the everlasting hills should bow, and that the adamantine rocks should crumble, and that the rivers should be dried up, and that there should be no more sea; but wonder mingles with sadness as we observe that man must needs die, and be as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth."¹ "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." It roots in the earth, and is fed by sun and rain and dew, and by the nutritive properties of the soil, and yet it quickly withers. Let the elements and the season favour it ever so genially, and the mower's scythe spare it, quickly it withers. Nor are even the flowers which stud it an exception, for they too, the fairest and tallest and sturdiest, pass away.

Humanity is in part "flesh," and appears to the bodily eye to be flesh only. And as man dieth and wasteth away, it is said of him, "all *flesh* is as grass." All flesh is not as the sun or moon or stars, it is not as the mountains or rocks or hills, it is not as the sea or lake or river, it is not as the cedar-tree or palm-tree or oak, it is not as the orchard-tree or fir-tree or myrtle, it is not as the aloe or hyssop or rose; but as the grass. I have seen it wither, sometimes slowly and sometimes quickly. A wind has passed over it, it has drooped and faded and languished and died. And I have seen the "flower" fall away. Is beauty the flower of the grass? we have seen beauty fall away. Is strength the flower of the grass? we have seen strength fall away. Is wealth the flower of the grass? we have seen wealth fall away. Is honour or fame that flower? we have seen both fall away.

¹ Psalm ciii. 15.

The difference between poor men and rich men, famous men and men without renown, is just the difference between grass and the flower of grass; but as both grass and the flower of grass wither, so it is appointed unto all men once to die. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass."

This simple fact involves very serious consequences. Man dies and leaves much work unfinished; his wealth falls into the hands of others; he destroys, as he falls, various domestic and social relationships; he terminates one stage, nay state, of existence; he wounds by his fall the hearts of his fellows; he dies, and places change tenants, and properties change inheritors, and occupations change hands. Here there can be no continuing city while man continueth not. And as we look upon man in his best estate, we must say, in answer to any who may exclaim, as expressive of satisfaction, "What is wanting here?" Continuance is lacking.

There are things, however, which continue, good things and precious, and things with which men have to do, and one of these things is mentioned in our text. Let us examine it.

Words are lasting things. The breath which inspires them perishes, and the lips which form them return to dust, and the instruments which inscribe them are destructible and perishable, but words spoken and heard, words written and read, have a boundless life and an immeasurable power. They are not transitory as bubbles, but enduring as the precious metals, or as precious stones. Bad words live, but good words are like apples, (not the natural apples, made to be eaten, and if not eaten so composed that they would soon perish), but like apples of gold in leaf-work of silver, A good word may continue to enlighten and enliven, to inform and invigorate, for ever and for ever.

All this is true of the words of man, but still more enduring in all their effects and influences are the words of the Lord. Many words has God spoken to us men. God has spoken certain commandments. God has spoken threatenings and promises, and God has caused to be written for our learning history, biography, poetry, prophecy, and religious philosophy. Among these several words of God, there is one communication which, on account of its singularity and importance, is called "*the word of the Lord,*" and which, by reason of its pleasantness and graciousness, is called "*the gospel.*" Now the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. What is wanting here? Nothing is wanting here, not even continuance. And there is one arrangement which secures its continuance. According to God's provision, it is the incorruptible seed from which the new man is begotten and raised: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."¹ And in the new nature of the redeemed, is the gospel preserved. It lives in God's mind; it lives, in fact, as a thing done and a provision completed; and it lives in the life of those who have been born again. This is the point we would look at now.

But first let me speak a few words about this gospel.

1. The nature of God, as revealed to us in the Scriptures, is the nature from which a gospel might be expected. As we read God's account of his own doings, he appears to us as full of life-giving power, benevolent, true, just, sin-hating, all-knowing, angry with wickedness and yet slow to anger; and as we listen to God speaking of himself, we find him self-existent and self-sufficient, almighty, all-merciful, holy, and love. From a nature less good we could not have

¹ 1 Peter i. 23.

looked for a gospel ; but such fruit we may expect to pluck from such a tree, and such a living stream we may expect to flow from such a fountain. The gospel, in the sense of being God-consistent and God-like, is the gospel of God, the gospel of the grace of God, and the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

2. The gospel so far as we appreciate it, and so far as we understand the thirsts and wants of human nature, is an all-sufficient gospel for man. If we consider man's natural cravings, we find the gospel recognises these, for it is a gospel of knowledge, and of power, and of fellowship, and of beauty, and of happiness, and of elevation, and of life, of true well-being and of highest well-doing. If we consider man fallen, as a criminal, then the gospel of God is a gospel of pardon and reformation, and of full and irrevocable restoration—restoration of damaged character, and of forfeited position, and of lost possession, and of blasted life.

3. A gospel less than the gospel of the grace of God must have left some thirst unslaked, or some necessity unmet, or some wound unhealed, or some tears unwiped away ; and while those tears were falling, and while that wound was smarting, and while that want was craving, and while that thirst was burning, there could not have been the experience and enjoyment of complete salvation.

4. A gospel more real and substantial, or more worthy of the world's acceptance, could not have issued even from God. We could not speak thus of many things without the most guilty presumption ; but we may thus speak of the gospel, for it hath in it the exceeding riches of God's grace and the unsearchable riches of Christ ; it offers not life merely, but life more abundantly, and it speaks of raising men not only up to heavenly places, but into the closest union and fellowship with God.

5. And this gospel is abiding, because it is the incorruptible seed of life everlasting. The word of the truth of the gospel reaches a man's ear, and becomes in the man's mind a thought. The judgment approves the thought, and the conscience sanctions the approval. Now the emotional nature is stirred by this thought—rather, series of thoughts—and desire, hope, and gladness, move the will. The hearer of the gospel accepts the gospel, and acts accordingly, and is now a believer and a doer of the word of the Lord. The man is now in Christ Jesus, and is a new creature; old things have passed away, behold all things have become new, and all things of God. The old spiritual nature is impregnated with the seed of a new man, a divine seed and incorruptible, the seed of the word of the Lord, the seed of the truth of the gospel; and the man who has thus received the gospel, is a being born again, who enters upon a new and eternal life. The gospel now lives in a living mind, and in a living heart, and in a living character; it repeats itself in the believer; and as the character and mission of Jesus Christ may be learned from the written life of Christ, so the gospel may be learned from the spiritual life of him who believes it.

Search into the man's thoughts of God. Let him think aloud. He thinks thus: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."¹ "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."² "God is love."³ Search into the man's thoughts of himself. Again let him think aloud; he thinks thus: "Behold, I am vile."⁴ "I am a sinner." "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." Here are thoughts and seed-thoughts. Here are thoughts corresponding to the word of

¹ John iv. 10.

² 1 John iii. 1.

³ 1 John iv. 16.

⁴ Job xl. 4.

the Lord and to the gospel. Here is the gospel. "All flesh is grass, but this word of the Lord will endure for ever." Inspect the man's conscience. You may do it in the secret place of his confession of sin. Listen, the conscience is quickened and sensitive and tender, for the man is saying, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned. I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me."¹ Come again and listen now; the wounds of the conscience are healed, for the man is singing, "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."² Here again is the word of the Lord, the gospel, in its most blessed fruits and effects; for here is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleansing from all sin. "All flesh is as grass, but this word of the Lord endureth for ever."

Look into the believer's heart. What find we there? Once that heart was like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; there was no peace in that heart. Once the soul was like a man in a frenzy; there was no rest in it; but now rest is shed abroad there, as sweet sleep creeps over the wearied but healthful labourer, and peace reigns like the divine calm of a fine summer evening. There is but one explanation of this: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."³ Indeed, all things in that heart are new. There is a marvellous quenching of old thirsts, and a wondrous quieting of former cravings. This fulfils the words of the Saviour, "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."⁴ And there are new hopes. God has blotted out as a cloud the sinner's transgressions, and as a thick cloud his sins; and, life's firmament being clear and cleansed, there is no expectation or dread of wrath-storms, but the

¹ Psalm li. 3, 4. ² Psalm xxxii. 5. ³ Rom. v. 1. ⁴ John vi. 35.

his poe begotten that eternal sunshine will settle upon the sinner's head. There are also new affections of every class. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."¹ The believer in the gospel joys in God through our Lord Jesus, by whom we have now received the atonement. And if, turning from the believer's heart, we look into his outward life, we may describe it thus: He was as a sheep going astray, but is now returned unto the Shepherd of souls. As he lies down upon green pastures, and walks beside still waters, as he listens to the Shepherd's voice and follows him, and as he rejoices in the safety and peace of the fold, he often sings,

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He to save my soul from danger,
Interposed his precious blood."

Here again is the gospel. - "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."² "All flesh is as grass, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

Yes, it endures while sharp blasts are sweeping over the grass, and when the grass is fading and withering as a green herb. The believer in the gospel rejoices in tribulation also, and when all things appear against him, he challenges his foes thus: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."³ Here, again, in this assurance

¹ 2 Tim. i. 7.

² Luke xix. 10.

³ Rom. viii. 35, 37-39.

of faith is the gospel, for it is said, "He that believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life."¹ "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."² "All flesh is grass, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

The believer has death in view; listen to his calm confidence, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."³ He is dying; open your ear to his whispers, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"⁴ "My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."⁵ Here again is the gospel. "I am the resurrection and the life," saith the Lord; "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die."⁶ Here again is the gospel. "All flesh is grass, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

At length men say of the Christian that he is dead. The place that knew him knows him no more; the mourners go about the streets; his body has been carried to its long home; but he is not dead, he sleepeth. Absent from the body he is present with the Lord. The earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved; but he has a building of God. He has died that mortality might be swallowed up of life. The Christian lives, and will live for ever; and the word of the Lord, the gospel, is in this life. This life? Yes! for it is redeemed life, and it is life redeemed unto God, and it is life redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; and it is Godlike life, happy life, holy life, active life, peaceful life,—life for the highest end, eternal life, abundant life, certain life,—life *with* God, life *in* God, life *for* God. And the word of the

¹ John iii. 16. ² John x. 28. ³ Psalm xxiii. 4. ⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 55.

⁵ Psalm lxxiii. 26. ⁶ John xi. 25, 26.

Lord, the gospel, is repeated in this life. It may be heard in the songs of the glorified, and may be read in their joy and safety and peace, in their godliness and immortality.

And thus, my brothers, the word of the Lord—the gospel—is not merely in Holy Scripture, in our sacred books, in our New Testament; but if we be Christians, it is within ourselves; not merely in God's pardoning and justifying and adopting us, but in ourselves, in our new birth and in our sanctification, in our love and hope and peace and joy, in our experience and character and outer life; and within us, not temporarily, but permanently, as incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever. Now as, if the biographies of our Saviour were destroyed, the Saviour would still live; so, if the word of the gospel were obliterated, the gospel as a dispensation would abide in the state and character of the saved; for they are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. As we read the gospel in the lives of the redeemed, and listen to it in their utterances, we find it to be a gospel of eternal light, and of everlasting life, and of unchanging love, and of abiding peace, and of sure reconciliation, and of eternal salvation; and we are sure that whatever may perish, the gospel will prove itself to be incorruptible. Then, as we stand and look upon the things which men of the world call good and great, and as we hear them demand, in a false satisfaction, "What is wanting here?" and as we reply, "Continuance is wanting," we may turn to the gospel, as embodied in our personal salvation, and say,—Here is continuance—"being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Thus far we have expounded the doctrine of the text. Let us now indicate the practical bearing of this doctrine.

1. The text magnifies the gospel. Let us be devoutly careful to preserve its gloriousness in our own eyes. And in order to do this, we must reverence the gospel. We will not worship the book in which it is written; but the book shall be sacred to us. We will not act superstitiously with respect to our New Testament; but we will not lightly, or flippantly, quote any of its sayings. We will not be afraid to look into the gospel; but our examination of it shall be devout, and conducted with a single eye, and with a pure heart, and with clean hands. We will rejoice to discover the harmony of the gospel with other truths; but we will not add to it or take from it, to produce any such harmony. We will use our mental faculties in searching into it; but we will not imagine that we can ever fully comprehend the length and breadth, the depth and height, of the love that is in the gospel, or the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. We will often speak of the gospel; but our words shall be sober and few, rather than random, and words without knowledge. We will freshen the air of life with cheerful songs, in which the gospel shall be the theme; but we will be careful to sing with melody in the heart. We will listen to all that good men and true say about the gospel; but we will never put men's sayings in the place of the gospel, or on a level with the gospel. If any man bring to us another doctrine as the gospel of God, and do this wilfully and determinately, we will have no fellowship with him, but he shall be to us as a heathen man and a publican, or as one accursed; but if any preach the gospel who do not follow with us, any who do not adopt our church polity, or worship in our modes, or hold every doctrine we believe, or speak our shibboleth; we will rejoice over them with loving gladness, and "we will wish them good luck in the name of the Lord."

2. The text shows what the gospel is intended to be to us personally, and thereby furnishes us with a test of our religious state. The gospel may be light to a man to whom it is not seed; the gospel may be a thing of beauty to a man to whom it is not seed; the gospel may be an object of deep and varied interest to a man to whom it is not seed. As a fulfilment of prophecy, as an embodiment of the meaning of certain divine symbols, as a scheme, as containing history and poetry, it may interest a man, and he may be further interested in it as containing and presenting one of the religions of mankind. But the gospel is intended to be nothing less than the seed of a new divine life within a man's soul; and it should be with each of us a matter of most solemn inquiry, 'Is the gospel the seed of a new life within me?' There are certain signs of the gospel being living seed, which are most distinct and positive in their testimony, and these signs God has enumerated and described. Examining ourselves by this aid, we cannot long remain in doubt as to our real state; and let us not be content with less than the best evidence, and the most full assurance, that the gospel is within us as incorruptible seed. A mistake here, if it be on the side of a too favourable judgment, is fatal,—fatal to our fondest hopes, and to our most cherished prospects, fatal to all which as Christians we hold dear. Is there, I ask again, a new man within us developed from this incorruptible seed, and ever rising toward, or into, a perfect godly manhood? The gospel is intended to be the germ of a godlike life within us, and if it fail of this, it fails of its chief effect.

3. The text points out that in which is continuance; let us take care to handle perishable things as perishable, and to demean ourselves toward the gospel as everlasting. Not a few things come into competition with it as claimants for our

attention and for our affections ; but none of these things are worthy even to compete. What is there of the things accounted valuable upon this earth which we can carry away with us? Not wealth, nor fame, nor friends, nor honour. Riches must be left behind, fame bursts like a bubble over most men's graves, friends are separated, and honour fades like garlands of roses or wreaths of laurel. But the gospel we can carry away with us—carry, not in some ark containing the gospel written upon tablets of stone—carry, not on parchment or paper written by man's hand or impressed by art, but in our character and spirit, as the incorruptible seed of eternal life. And for ever will that gospel be with us, because for ever within us, and because for ever embodied in our joys and songs, in our safety and peace, in our holiness and rest, in the godlikeness of our character, and in the blessedness of our entire state.

Nor is there anything in the gospel which, after it has become incorruptible seed within us, tends to evil of any kind or degree, or leads to disappointment and regret. But of what beside can this affirmation be made?

" Earth's cup

Is poisoned, her renown most infamous ;
 Her gold, seem as it may, is really dust ;
 Her titles, slanderous names, her praise reproach ;
 Her strength an idiot's boast, her wisdom blind,
 Her gain eternal loss, her hope a dream ;
 Her love, her friendship, enmity with God ;
 Her promises a lie, her smile a harlot's,
 Her beauty, paint and rottenness within ; her pleasures,
 Deadly assassins mask'd ; her laughter grief,
 Her breasts the sting of death ; her total sum,
 Her all, most utter vanity ; and all
 Her lovers mad, insane most grievously ;
 And most insane, because they know it not."

Never then let us allow earth's cup to come into competition with the cup of salvation. Never let us permit the

seed which is corruptible, and which produces only corruption, to attract our desire and confidence, equally with that seed which endureth unto everlasting life.

4. The text suggests the strongest motives for the immediate and universal preaching of the gospel. Flesh is as grass. The man whose days are as grass is dying daily. And it is only here, where he is dying, and while he is breathing out his brief life, that his nature can be impregnated with this incorruptible seed. If he pass out of this world without this seed, he carries with him the seeds of death, even of a second death—of death to all purity and righteousness, to all joy and peace, to all rest and comfort, to all that is bright and blessed, good and godlike; or, if disease of the body make the ear deaf and the eye dim, and disorder the mind, then even before the grass withers, all hope of impregnating it with incorruptible seed perishes, and that for ever. This ministration requires haste. There is not a day, or an hour, or a moment to be lost. And *all* flesh is as grass. Men in every quarter of the globe, in all climates, and in all circumstances, are dying, and carrying into a future state the seeds of a second death. So that no exception can be made in these ministrations. The gospel must be carried into all the world, and preached to every creature. And if by speaking the word of the Lord, by preaching the gospel, the incorruptible seed should enter one child of Adam, and he should live,—live unto Christ, live unto God, live to righteousness, live where so many are dead in sins, live in peace here where man's troubles are so many, live in holiness where temptations are so strong, live while his body sleeps in the grave, and finally live in heaven a Godlike life, and there live for ever,—is there any ministration upon this earth, or even from heaven, which surpasses this? It is more than God's saying, "Let there

be light." It is more than shaping this earth into a globe when it was without form, or clothing it with wealth when it was utterly void. How strange it is that we, who have the gospel and know its blessedness, are not more in earnest about spreading it! There is something unaccountable in the miserable apathy which sometimes creeps over us all, as it respects communicating the gospel. There are many to whom we might make known the faithful saying, to whom we have never spoken. And when we do speak, our utterance is often sadly out of harmony with our theme. What is the remedy for this, and what the antidote? Surely a fuller consciousness of the life which is developed from this seed, and a richer enjoyment of it. This will open our mouth to speak of the gospel, when and how we ought to speak. If I give property to a man, he may lose it; if I entrust him with a business, it may decline; if I give him scientific knowledge, it may vanish away; if I teach him a language, his use of that tongue may fail; but if I communicate the gospel to his heart, I give him incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever.

And, finally, the text encourages us to sustain, and in all respects to provide for, the continuous preaching of the gospel. All flesh is as grass, and the preacher of the gospel is no exception. He who has taught others to shout, "O death, where is thy sting?" and "O grave, where is thy victory?" himself dies, and is himself the grave's captive. He who has stood long on the time-side of the valley of the shadow of death, speaking to the pilgrims as they pass through the valley, and saying, "Fear not," himself becomes a traveller through that vale of darkness. One after another the preachers of the gospel enter that valley, and are seen no more. But what do they leave behind? The sanctuaries in which they ministered? Yes; but something

more. The flocks they tended? Yes; but something more. A fragrant name? Yes; but something more. Pleasant memories? Yes; but much more. The word of the Lord in Holy Scripture, and the gospel in hymns and Christian songs? Yes; but something more. They leave that gospel, written not on tablets of stone, but upon the fleshy tablets of the heart; they leave that gospel more than written—they leave it in many hearts, a seed with a germ of Godlike and eternal life in it; they leave it as a new man, in many who have been born again by it as by incorruptible seed; they leave it in the rich experiences and holy activities of the new man; they leave it in a state imperishable, and they may leave it without anxiety, for the gospel is not left for the winds to waft the story, or for the waters of the great deep to convey the treasure, or for some bird of the air to carry the voice, or for some creature unconscious of the value of the gospel to tell; it is left in the minds and hearts, in the experience and character and lives of redeemed men; and now some of these are called, not only spiritually to realize the gospel, and to live out the gospel, but also to testify with their lips, and preach with their mouths, the gospel of the grace of God. The fathers by whom they were spiritually begotten, where are they? And the prophets who taught them, do they live for ever? If it be the highest glory of man to be the conscious and willing instrument of performing God's highest work, then it is the glory of man to be a successful preacher of the gospel. Poets and philosophers and statesmen and princes, are, so far as honour and useful service are concerned, inferior to him, and he degrades his office when he bows down to knowledge, or intellect, or wealth, or rank; or when he condescends to be patronized, or to receive honour from men. But while all flesh is as grass, and all the

glory of man is as the flower of grass ; instead of the fathers must come up the children, whom God may anoint as preachers to all the earth. The everlasting gospel is committed to successive generations of believing men, who are able to teach others also. The incorruptible seed lives in them, and they are the means of communicating this seed to others.

But these men are often called, like Jeremiah and Timothy, while yet in their teens, and they require a Nazareth of seclusion in which they may be brought up. They are called, knowing the way of God imperfectly, and they need to sit at the feet of some Aquila or Paul. They are called to encounter peculiar spiritual temptations, as a spiritual baptism for their sacred work, and they need the wilderness of retirement from the common activities of life. They are called to toils and to troubles, for which no man is equal, except as he strengthens his heart by communion with God ; and they need the mountain of comparative solitude to which they may retire to pray. Not many rich are called. Heaven's prophets and apostles have never included many rich men. And this is no accident, but a divine arrangement, and it casts the neophyte into the arms of Christ's church and commits him to her bosom. And will she cast him out, or commit him to the bulrush ark of earning his bread, while he, by reading and study, meditation and prayer, is preparing to speak the word of the Lord and to preach the gospel? The church of Christ *may* do it, but when? Not while the gospel is within her as incorruptible seed, but when the gospel becomes a dead letter ; not while the gospel is living in the experience and activities of Christians, but while the gospel is preserved only upon paper and by ink ; not while she looks upon all flesh as grass and upon the word of the Lord as living and

abiding for ever, but when she acts as though the gospel were corruptible, and as though all flesh were everlasting. The church which most values the gospel, will most tenderly cherish those whom God has anointed for the preaching of the gospel.

Young brothers, beloved of God, elect of God, remember that the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you. God has taken you, taken you from the sheepfolds that you may seek his wandering sheep and feed his flock; taken you from the fishing-boats to make you fishers of men; taken you from tent-making to work upon God's building; taken you from the receipt of custom to make you stewards of the mysteries of God; taken you from your father's house to minister in the house in which he has placed his name; and we joy with you in the honour which our God has conferred upon you. Oh! be entirely consecrated to the service for which heaven has elected you. Present your bodies life-sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God. And receive, with my loving congratulations, the prayer of my heart, that the Lord may richly bless you and surely keep you, aiding you now in your studies, in due time introducing you to your work, and in that work prospering you with most divine success. Then, when we your seniors have withered and fallen, and are illustrating the declaration that all flesh is as grass, you, our successors, by your Christian character and conduct, and by your gospel preaching, shall represent the affirmation, that the word of God is incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever.



